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# PREFATORY NOTE.

THE contents of the following volume are reprinted from the 'Contemporary Review,' the 'Fortnightly Review,' the 'St. Pauls Magazine,' 'Good Words,' and the 'Athenæum.' They comprise the lighter and more generally interesting of the writer's contributions to periodical literature; and they will be followed, after an interval, by a collection of his more strictly critical and philosophic papers. They may be accepted as mere desultory notes on literary subjects of permanent interest, by one whose real work lies in another field.

The writer has to entreat the reader's indulgence for verbal blunders, if such exist, as the state of his health at the present date does not admit of laborious verification of quotations.

R. B.

GREAT MALVERN: July 1, 1873.

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# MASTER-SPIRITS.

## *INTRODUCTION.*

### CRITICISM AS ONE OF THE FINE ARTS.

AMONG the many vague forms which modern ingenuity has tried to manipulate into a Science must be classed what is usually called Criticism ; but, for my own part, I am inclined to think that Criticism means to belong to the Fine Arts, and to elude the scientific arrangement altogether.

There was a time, of course, when books, pictures, and music were judged by a certain set of fixed rules, each incontestable as the law of gravitation ; when contemporary persons could appraise the value of an æsthetic article as easily as a grocer finds out the weight of a pound of sugar ; when, in fact, critics knew their business thoroughly, being in the secret of the manufacture. Sometimes the critical scales were entrusted to one man, say to Voltaire, or John Dryden, or Addison.

Again, public opinion was guided by a kind of joint-stock company, like Pope, Swift, and Co., or Gifford and Co., or Jeffrey, Brougham, and Co. In all cases alike judgment was *infallible;* there was no appeal. And the laws on which sentence was founded were, curiously enough, considered so unimpeachable, that one no more thought of questioning them than believers think of questioning the divine laws of Confucius, or the miracles of Mahomet, or the revelations of the Apocalypse. Moreover, these laws had all the weight of mystery. No one had ever read the golden book wherein they were enshrined. They were written in an unknown tongue; the High-Priest of Criticism sat on the tripod, and interpreted. In this way, things amazing and awful came to pass. At one time it was decreed here in England that Abraham Cowley was a mighty poetical genius; and at another it was settled, there in France, that Shakspeare was a rude unsavoury monster. The Oracle spake, and Klopstock was crowned. The Public listened and approved. No unordained person dared to interfere in so profound a matter. The little murmur of protest that rose when impostors like Keats were punished, soon died away in the loud roar greeting the coronation of divinities like Mr. Sotheby. Criticism, in fact, was a semi-religious rite performed by a Priesthood, guided partly by a set of divine rules, partly by a kind of corybantic inspiration.

Recent scepticism has tried to demolish much—the Pentateuch and some of the miracles, for example; but it has never yet demolished the brazen Idols of Criticism.

The public press has advanced a great deal, freeing men's minds and widening their knowledge; but, strange to say, it has not yet advanced to the point of refusing to shelter that worst class of priestcraft, which pronounces anonymous judgm nts. It is quite true, however, that now-a-days it does not much matter, since critics are thoroughly disorganised, and each wiseacre, on a tripod of his own, delivers judgment to a special circle; so that publishing a book or showing a picture is simply another sort of 'running the gauntlet.' But it is surely high time, in this questioning age, to ask on what grounds this critical priesthood still exists at all? why it presumes to give judgment, often with such reckless disregard of consequences? what use it is to any soul under the sun? and how, having once proved it as thorough a humbug as the Delphic oracle itself, we are to get rid of it in the speediest possible manner?

To begin with, what *is* Criticism?

Strictly speaking, of course, it is the application of certain tests, by which we may ascertain the value of specific articles, just as we find out the quality of gold. These tests, applied to literature and art, have produced most astounding results, without really enlightening mankind at all. It was all very well when the work was cut and dried. At one time, for example, Criticism did almost all her work by a cabalistic yard-measure called the 'Unities.' Nothing could be easier. Whenever an epic poem or a tragedy was brought up for judgment, out came the yard-measure, and the matter was decided in a moment. The thing either did or did not conform

to the Unities, and was praised or damned accordingly; and in those days, we may remark, *en passant*, Shakspeare was nowhere. Latterly, however, such tests as this have been abandoned in despair. It is recognised as a privilege of genius to break all set rules, and so ride triumphant over them. There is no absolute axiom of criticism which some great man may not falsify in practice to-morrow. Here again, therefore, we ask with some asperity, what is Criticism?

No science certainly. No list of set rules to be applied by a priesthood. No sum as easy to manage as the multiplication table What then?

Criticism, now-a-days, simply means (it is doubtful whether at any time it has meant much more) the *impression* produced on certain minds by certain products. If Jones paints a picture, and it is noticed unfavourably in the 'Peckham Review,' the criticism does not come right up out from Delphi, but consists simply of so much 'copy' in the handwriting of Robinson. If Brown composes a poem, and it is wildly eulogised in the 'Stokeinpogis Chronicle,' let him first bethink himself, before he become too bumptious, that the eulogy in question is simply the result of an individual impression, say on the mind of Smith. In any of these cases it is quite clear that the value of the criticism depends on the amount of honesty and intelligence possessed by Robinson and Smith respectively. To get anything like a fair insight into the truth, we must take care to ascertain at least a few preliminaries:

1. How old the critic is, and what is the bent of his intellect.

2. What are his favourite authors? What is his chief study?

3. Has he ever written or painted himself, and if so, is he at all *soured?*

4. Is he personally acquainted with the author or painter criticised? and if so, are his relations with him friendly, *or the reverse?*

5. Is he usually honest in the expression of his opinions? &c. &c.

These seem unlimited questions, but, in point of fact, they are virtually answered in all criticism that has any weight. They are least answered, of course, in *anonymous* criticism; but, even then, they are partially settled to the public satisfaction. One may calculate to a nicety, for example, what effect such and such a new work will produce on the editor of the 'Times,' or of the 'Spectator,' or of the 'Saturday Review.' A work of high and daring originality, unpopular in form, will be utterly ignored by the leading journal, patronised (if it contain no offence to the Broad Church) in the 'Spectator,' and gibed and grinned at in the 'Saturday Review.' Behind and beyond the natural style and temper of these professional critics, there lie of course the mysterious workings of private liking and prejudice. Now and then, when we see the unpopular tone taken in the 'Times,' we know what enormous secret influence must have been used to get that tone taken. There is no one of these journals, there is no one of the men who

write these journals, quite free of undue influence in some direction or other; conscious or unconscious—it is there. There is, in fact, no end to the questions we must definitely answer before we ascertain the value of any published opinion. It is in all cases the record of an impression only; but how has that impression been taken? How rare it is to find a man in whose capability of *receiving* an honest influence we can place full reliance! It is not dishonesty we have to fear, but certain unconscious weaknesses. Even in the cases of such men as Mr. Mill, or Mr. Herbert Spencer, or Sainte-Beuve, or M. Taine, we must have our doubts. We almost trust them, but now and then we pause. And then, when the critical moment comes, what is their 'impression' worth? Personally, much; scientifically, not a rap!

It is great fun—fun given to poor mortality, alas! too seldom—to see the advent of some outrageous Genius, some

> Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrendus
> Demoniaco-seraphic

prodigy of the Euphorion order, starting up, to the horror of criticism, and carrying all the masses before him by simple charm. Wonderful is that gift of producing on thousands of people precisely the same set of favourable impressions; wonderful is that gift, whether possessed by a Dickens, a Tennyson, or a Tupper. Fortunately the great mass of people are their own 'tasters,' judging for themselves at first hand, and they will not be guided by the literary Priests, however wise;

and it is simply delicious to observe how reputations grow, in spite of all the Priesthood do to trample them down. Let no man despair merely because the few who write abuse him. The abuse simply means that he is not wanted by Smith, Brown, and Jones; while all the time he is being eagerly waited for by all the legions of the Robinsons, to whom every word he drops is a revelation. Dickens was abused by genteel journals, but what cared he?

Every author or artist, in fact, is a gauge to tell how many people there are in the world of about his own ratio of intelligence—minus the creative faculty. There are one hundred thousand Tuppers. There are (it is seriously calculated) one hundred Stuart Mills and fifty Herbert Spencers. In art, the Faeds and Friths are innumerable; the Leightons numerous; and the Poynters infinitesimal. For many years, Browning paid the public large sums, as it were, for the privilege of publishing poems; only there was no article in the agreement that the poems in question were to be *read*; and now, the public has turned the tables, and is paying all the money back for the privilege of reading those very poems. Luckily, we say, Criticism can only do mischief up to a certain point, and cannot do that mischief long. It may delay a reputation, but it cannot kill it. The public, in the long run, will have its own way, and choose its own favourite, and will choose according to the direct impression made by the favourite in question.

But what a boon it would be to the public if the gentlemen who 'do' criticism, instead of assuming

the priestly robe and sitting veiled on a tripod, were simply and fearlessly to tell us how certain works have affected them, what they like and dislike in them, how they seem to stand in relation to other literature! What time this would save! What lying it would avoid! To speak with authority is 'parlous' indeed. Who gains anything when Anonymous writes that Browning's last poem is sheer balderdash, or that Simeon Solomon's last picture is divinely original? *Who* says so? That is what we want to get at. If it be Smith, let Smith come forward and sign his name. Of course, much in criticism is self-convincing, quite apart from the writer's identity; and the best and most convincing criticism of all, in the case of a book, is free and ungarbled *extract* from the work under notice: extract can seldom be unfair. But in how many cases should we be on our guard if we knew what critic was administering judgment! Take an instance. Mr. Grote devotes a lifetime to the study of Plato, and at last produces a great work on the subject. This work, being sent to the 'Megatherium' for review, is handed over to Tomkins, who is fresh from the university, where, so far from making any mark, he was considered a dull fellow, and has drifted into the most irresponsible of all business, that of anonymous reviewing.

### Tomkins's Qualifications.

1. He is 28 years of age, and with little experience either of men or books.

2. He was crammed for his degree, and knows little of Greek beyond the alphabet.

3. He has quick intelligence, great power of hiding his ignorance, and little honesty.

4. He is mentally incapable of conceiving a Platonic proposition, &c.

Here, it will be admitted, we should know what to think of Tomkins's criticism on Grote, if he candidly prefixed to it the above list of qualifications; yet, ten to one, Tomkins, under his anonymous guise, manages so cleverly to conceal his ignorance that we feel perfectly satisfied when he concludes: 'Passing over certain errors and repetitions pardonable in a work of such magnitude, as well as the pedantic mode of spelling some words more familiar to us in their Latinized shape, we may record our opinion that this work has given us real pleasure,—an opinion in which, we are sure, every scholar will join. We have already expressed our disapproval of certain passages, and have indicated where they need revision; these revisions made, the work will stand as a monument of English scholarship and a complete manual of the subject.'

Take another instance. A man of genius, to whom this generation does scant justice, Mr. William Gilbert, publishes a story, in which the real life of the lower classes in our country is pictured for us with a fidelity which would be terrible, if it were not illuminated by the most subtle and delicate humour. This story goes to the 'Dilettante Gazette,' and in course of time is handed over to Chesterfield Junior, Esq., of the Inner Temple.

## Chesterfield Junior's Qualifications for 'criticising' 'De Profundis.'[1]

1. He is 30 years of age, a literary man about town, and his tastes are elegant.

2. His notion of the working man is that he is a 'rough;' and his notion of life generally is that it is a series of dinings-out, unpleasantly varied by sullen requisitions on the part of the lower classes for 'goods received.'

3. He is utterly destitute of beneficence; he has not even a *dramatic* perception of what beneficence is.

4. His favourite author is Thackeray; but he enjoys the 'fun' of Dickens, &c.

5. He is utterly and hopelessly unconscious of the limited nature of his own literary vision.

Chesterfield Junior's criticism on the marvellous tale of common life would probably amount to this:—'We have here a study, in the manner of Defoe, of one of the least interesting forms of life generated by our overcrowded cities. No one can doubt the cleverness of the hard literal drawing; but to us it is simply unpleasant. It is a photograph, not a picture. It altogether lacks beauty, and has not one flash of the illuminating humour which distinguishes Dickens's work in the same direction.' In this case, be it noted, every word is the record of a genuine impression on a mind to whose sympathies the object does not appeal. Just suppose that, in addition to the natural antipathy, Chesterfield Junior had the least bit of *personal* animosity to his author, and he would

[1] 'De Profundis: a Tale of the Social Deposits.' By William Gilbert. (Strahan and Co.)

hardly plead guilty to conscious injustice if he wrote in terms of entire condemnation : 'Mr. Gilbert is a realist of the penny-a-liner type, without one gleam of genius, and his book is the most vulgar and unpleasant production we have read for a long time. Led by the natural gravitation of his mind to the study of what is low and common, and incapable of anything but a vulgarising treatment, he solicits our interests in the futures of a virtuous washer-woman; a drummer, and an irreclaimable thief. Trash like this is simply intolerable to any person of refined tastes.' Poor Chesterfield Junior! He means no harm. He is only a sheep with a silk ribbon on his neck, bleating his mutton-like defiance. A few people are deceived, and say to themselves, 'This Mr. Gilbert must be a very unpleasant writer!' We, who know better, only smile, saying, 'Chesterfield Junior has put his poor little foot into it again, as is again and again the custom of creatures without eyes.'

On the other hand, let the same work fall into the hands of Addison Redivivus, whose qualifications are great beneficence, vast experience of the lower classes, a natural repugnance to all false sentiment and fine writing, and that sort of intelligence which gives as well as takes illumination; and we shall speedily hear, perhaps, that 'De Profundis' is, for sheer perfection in the rarest of all styles, a work with scarcely a peer, possessing both truth and beauty, bearing on every page the sign of a masterly understanding and of the finest intellectual humour, and leaving on the competent reader's mind an impression in the highest sense imaginative and poetical. Who would be right—Chesterfield Junior or Addison Redivivus?

Criticism, we repeat, is no science. Neither Chesterfield nor Addison can settle the matter by any fixed rule. They merely chronicle their impression *pro* or *contra*, and the value of the impression depends on our knowledge of the person impressed. Well, if Criticism is no Science, what is it? It seems to me that Criticism, as the representation of the effect particular works have on particular individuals, is rapidly securing its place as one of the Fine Arts, and that its value is in exact proportion to the amount of artistic *self-portraiture* attained by the critic.

We have half-a-dozen tolerable critics in England, but we have perhaps only one equal *as an artist* to the person whom I shall use to illustrate my proposition. Now that Sainte-Beuve is gone, the finest living specimen is M. Taine, whose works are winning appreciation here as well as in France. M. Taine has great intelligence, culture, literary experience. His faculty of composition may be described as almost creative. Wherein, then, does this faculty consist? It consists, I am sure, in the man's unequalled power of representing his own qualifications; of illustrating to us, by a thousand delicate lights and shades, the quality of his own mind and its limitations; and of revealing to us, as frequently as possible, the nature of his education and its effect on his tastes. Sooner or later, he enables us to become on intimate terms with him. He conceals little or nothing. He lays bare the most secret sources of his sympathies and his antipathies. He invariably discards the 'editorial' tone. And when once we know him thoroughly, nothing can be more delightful than his way of playing with his theme.

We know almost by instinct where he will be right and where he may be wrong. His work belongs to the Fine Arts, and at times approaches masterly portrayal.

'The following,' M. Taine says in effect, 'are my qualifications :—

'1. I am not too young for self-restraint, nor too old for sympathy, and I have had an excellent education.

'2. I am a Frenchman, educated under the Empire, and (more or less unconsciously) "æstheticised."

'3. I have the French hatred of "institutions," and the French deficiency in the religious faculty.

'4. My passion for *symmetry* may lead you to believe me a formal person ; but I am in reality a loose thinker, dexterously manœuvring impressions under the guise of a finished style.

'5. Form, as form, almost always fascinates me, but I *try* most to sympathise where the subject is most shapeless.

'6. I am thoroughly conscious of my limitations, and seldom try to conceal them.

'7. In spite of my seeming power of surveying large surfaces (the result of my instinct of symmetrical arrangement), my faculty is microscopic, and examines every work of art inch by inch, phrase by phrase, *afterwards* piecing the criticism together into the form of a verdict on the whole work.'

Much more might be added ; but the point is, that M. Taine, being a thorough artist, tells us all the above, directly or indirectly, and makes us alive to it at every step. He never allows us for a moment to lose sight of

himself; and he is at his best when he is least impersonal, and most candid in portraying his emotions.

How delicious it is, for example, to find a critic showing his own intellectual physiognomy in this way, when beginning to criticise a great English philosopher:—

When at Oxford some years ago, during the meeting of the British Association, I met, amongst the few students still in residence, a young Englishman, a man of intelligence, with whom I became intimate. He took me in the evening to the New Museum, well filled with specimens. Here short lectures were delivered, new models of machinery were set to work; ladies were present and took an interest in the experiments; on the last day, full of enthusiasm, 'God save the Queen' was sung. I admired this zeal, this solidity of mind, this organisation of science, these voluntary subscriptions, this aptitude for association and for labour, this great machine pushed on by so many arms, and so well fitted to accumulate, criticise, and classify facts. But yet, in this abundance, there was a void; when I read the Transactions, I thought I was present at a congress of heads of manufactories. All these learned men verified details and exchanged recipes. It was as though I listened to foremen, busy in communicating their processes for tanning leather or dyeing cotton: general ideas were wanting. I used to regret this to my friend; and in the evening, by his lamp, amidst that great silence in which the university town lay wrapped, we both tried to discover its reasons.

One day I said to him: You lack philosophy—I mean, what the Germans call metaphysics. You have learned men, but you have no thinkers. Your God impedes you. He is the Supreme Cause, and you dare not reason on causes, out of respect for Him. He is the most important personage in England, and I see clearly that He merits his position; for He forms part of your Constitution, He is the guardian of your morality, He judges in final appeal on all questions whatsoever, He replaces with

advantage the prefects and gendarmes with whom the nations on the Continent are still encumbered. Yet this high rank has the inconvenience of all official positions ; it produces a cant, prejudices, intolerance, and courtiers. Here, close by us, is poor Mr. Max Müller, who, in order to acclimatise the study of Sanscrit, was compelled to discover in the Vedas the worship of a moral God, that is to say, the religion of Paley and Addison. Some time ago, in London, I read a proclamation of the Queen, forbidding people to play cards, even in their own houses, on Sundays. It seems that, if I were robbed, I could not bring my thief to justice without taking a preliminary religious oath ; for the judge has been known to send a complainant away who refused to take the oath, deny him justice, and insult him into the bargain. Every year, when we read the Queen's speech in your papers, we find there the compulsory mention of Divine Providence, which comes in mechanically, like the apostrophe to the immortal gods on the fourth page of a rhetorical declamation ; and you remember that once, the pious phrase having been omitted, a second communication was made to Parliament for the express purpose of supplying it. All these cavillings and pedantry indicate to my mind a celestial monarchy ; naturally, it resembles all others—I mean that it relies more willingly on tradition and custom than on examination and reason. A monarchy never invited men to verify its credentials.—*Taine's History of English Literature, trans. by Henry Van Laun*, vol. ii., pp. 478–479 (*Essay on John Stuart Mill*).

Even if the above did not occur at the end of two large volumes, full of self-portraiture more or less indirect, it would reveal to us, as by a sun-picture, the man with whom we have to deal. Herein lies the delightful art of it. We certainly do get some formal ideas in the end about Mr. Mill, but our real interest for the time being is in M. Taine. How subtle he is ! how thoroughly French ! How just and kind he is in other places to

Tennyson and Thackeray: but how much more he *loves* De Musset and Balzac! He becomes our personal friend, and every word he utters has weight. His egotism is charming; we could hear him talk for hours.

In England here, critics for the most part assume the editorial tone, and are proportionally uninteresting. To the long list of critics who write without edification, either because they decline self-revelation or are uninteresting when revealed, may be added, in modern times, the names of Mr. Lewes, late editor of the 'Fortnightly Review,' and the Duke of Argyll. These gentlemen sign their articles, but utterly fail to attract us: they are so thoroughly, so transparently, 'editorial.' Critics of the higher class, on the other hand, may be found in Sir Arthur Helps, Mr. Matthew Arnold, and (with a slight editorial leaven) in Mr. R. H. Hutton, who has recently published two volumes of essays. Mr. Arnold may or may not be an interesting being, but he never for a moment represents himself as what he is not. We know him as thoroughly as if we had been to school with him. We do not get angry with what he says, so much as with his insufferable manner of saying it.[1] Sir Arthur Helps is, once and for ever, the optimist man of the world. Mr. R. H. Hutton, a writer of powerful, original genius and wonderful subtlety of insight, shows us, as in a mirror, his religion, his deep-seated prejudice, his quick sympathy with ideas as distinguished from literary clothing, and his genial love of microscopic *délicatesse.*

[1] I am speaking of Arnold's prose. His poetry is beautiful beyond measure.

In many cases, the Anonymous is a mere cloak, and everybody knows whom it conceals. The public bowed before the judgment of Jeffrey and Brougham, not that of the *Edinburgh Review;* before the judgment of Gifford and Southey, not that of the *Quarterly Review.* Nowadays, nevertheless, the anonymous pen has multiplied itself so prodigiously, that the air rings with fiats and acclaims, and Heaven knows who is uttering them! It is wonderful how Genius gets along, and escapes being put down; wonderful how fairly the oracles speak, in spite of their irresponsibility. Still, the only Criticism worth a rap belongs to the Fine Artist, and the only Critic who really carries us away is he whose personality we entirely respect.

There seems no end to the extension of so-called criticism as a creative form of composition (as valuable in its way as lyrical poetry or autobiography), wherein we have the representation of certain known products on certain competent or incompetent natures. The man who criticises may attract us by the tints of his own individuality, and the play of his own soul, as successfully as the man who sings or the man who paints. His work is merely the final record of an impression which, before reaching him, has passed through the colouring matter of the poet's or painter's mind. To conclude, then, Scientific Criticism is fudge, as sheer fudge as scientific poetry, as scientific painting; but Criticism *does* belong to the Fine Arts, and for that reason its future prospects are positively unlimited.

## *THE 'GOOD GENIE' OF FICTION.*

CHARLES DICKENS.

THERE was once a good Genie, with a bright eye and a magic hand, who, being born out of his due time and place, and falling not upon fairy ways, but into the very heart of this great city of London wherein we write, walked on the solid earth in the nineteenth century in a most spirit-like and delightful dream. He was such a quaint fellow, with so delicious a twist in his vision, that where you and I (and the wise critics) see straight as an arrow, he saw everything queer and crooked; but this, you must know, was a terrible defect in the good Genie, a tremendous weakness, for how *can* you expect a person to behold things as they are whose eyes are so wrong in his head that they won't even make out a straight mathematical line?

To the good Genie's gaze everything in this rush of life grew queer and confused. The streets were droll, and the twisted windows winked at each other. The Water had a voice, crying, 'Come down! come down!' and the Wind and Rain became absolute human entities, with ways of conducting themselves strange beyond expression. Where you see a clock, *he* saw a face and

heard the beating of a heart. The very pump at Aldgate became humanized, and held out its handle like a hand for the good Genie to shake. Amphion was nothing to him. To make the gouty oaks dance hornpipes, and the whole forest go country-dancing, was indeed something, but how much greater was the feat of animating stone houses, great dirty rivers, toppling chimneys, staring shop windows, and the laundress's wheezy mangle! Pronounce as we may on the wisdom of the Genie's conduct, no one doubts that the world was different before he came; the same world, doubtless, but a duller, more expressionless world; and perhaps, on the whole, the people in it—especially the poor, struggling people—wanted one great happiness which a wise and tender Providence meant to send.

The Genie came and looked, and after looking for a long time, began to speak and print; and so magical was his voice, that a crowd gathered round him, and listened breathlessly to every word; and so potent was the charm, that gradually all the crowd began to see everything as the charmer did (in other words, as the wise critics say, to *squint* in the same manner), and to smile in the same odd, delighted, bewildered fashion. Never did pale faces brighten more wonderfully! never did eyes that had seen straight so very long, and so very, very sadly, brighten up so amazingly at discovering that, absolutely, everything was crooked! It was a quaint world, after all, quaint in both laughter and tears, odd over the cradle, comic over the grave, rainbowed by laughter and sorrow in one glorious Iris, melting into a

thousand beautiful hues. 'My name,' said the good Genie, 'is Charles Dickens, and I have come to make you all—but especially the poor and lowly—brighter and happier.' Then, smiling merrily, he waved his hands, and one by one, along the twisted streets, among the grinning windows and the human pumps, quaint figures began to walk, while a low voice told stories of Human Fairyland, with its ghosts, its ogres, its elves, its good and bad spirits, its fun and frolic, oft culminating in veritable harlequinade, and its dim, dew-like glimmerings of pathos. There was no need any longer for grown-up children to sigh and wish for the dear old stories of the nursery. What was Puss in Boots to Mr. Pickwick in his gaiters? What was Tom Thumb, with all its oddities, to poor Tom Pinch playing on his organ all alone up in the loft? A new and sweeter Cinderella arose in Little Nell; a brighter and dearer little Jack Horner eating his Christmas pie was found when Oliver Twist appeared and 'asked for more.'

It was certainly enchanting the earth with a vengeance, when all life became thus marvellously transformed. In the first place, the world was divided, just as old Fairyland had been divided, into good and bad fairies, into beautiful Elves and awful Ogres, and everybody was either very loving or very spiteful. There were no composite creatures, such as many of our human tale-tellers like to describe. Then there was generally a sort of Good Little Boy who played the part of hero, and who ultimately got married to a Good Little Girl, who played the part of heroine.

In the course of their wanderings through human fairyland, the hero and heroine met all sorts of strange characters — queer-looking Fairies, like the Brothers Cheeryble, or Mr. Toots, or David Copperfield's aunt, or Mr. Dick, or the convict Magwitch ; out-and-out Ogres, ready to devour the innocent, and without a grain of goodness in them, like Mr. Quilp, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Fagin the Jew, Carker with his white teeth, Rogue Riderhood, and Lawyer Tulkinghorn ; comical Will-o'-the-wisps, or moral Impostors, flabby of limb and sleek of visage, called by such names as Stiggins, Chadband, Snawley, Pecksniff, Bounderby, and Uriah Heep. Strange people, forsooth, in a strange country. Wise critics said that the country was not the world at all, but simply Topsy-turvyland ; and indeed there might have seemed some little doubt about the matter, if every now and again, in the world we are speaking of, there had not appeared a group of poor people with such real laughter and tears that their humanity was indisputable. Scarcely had we lost sight for a moment of the Demon Quilp, when whom should we meet but Codlin and Short sitting mending their wooden figures in the churchyard ? and not many miles off was Mrs. Jarley, every scrap on whose bones was real human flesh ; the Peggotty group living in their upturned boat on the sea-shore, while little Em'ly watches the incoming tide erasing her tiny footprint on the sand ; the Dorrit family, surrounding the sadly comic figure of the Father of the Marshalsea ; good Mrs. Richards and her husband the Stoker, struggling through thorny paths of adversity with never

a grumble; Trotty Veck sniffing the delicious fumes of the tripe a good fairy is bringing to him; and Tiny Tim waving his spoon, and crying, 'God bless us all!' in the midst of the smiling Cratchit family on Christmas Day.

This was more puzzling still—to find 'real life' and 'fairy life' blended together most fantastically. It was like that delightful tale of George MacDonald's, where you never can tell truth from fancy, and where you see the country in fairyland is just like the real country, with cottages [and cooking going on inside], and roads, and flower-gardens, and finger posts, yet everything haunted most mysteriously by supernatural creatures. But let the country described by the good Genie be ever so like the earth, and the poor folk moving in it ever so like life, there was never any end to the enchantment. On the slightest provocation trees and shrubs would talk and dance, intoxicated public-houses hiccup, clocks talk in measured tones, tombstones chatter their teeth, lamp-posts reel idiotically, all inanimate nature assume animate qualities. The better the real people were, and the poorer, the more they were haunted by delightful Fays. The Cricket talked on the hearth, and the Kettle sang in human words. The plates on the dresser grinned and gleamed, when the Pudding rolled out of its smoking cloth, saying perspiringly, 'Here we are again!' Talk about Furniture and Food being soulless things! The good Genie knew better. Whenever he went into a mean and niggardly house, he saw the poor devils of chairs and tables attenuated and wretched, the lean time-

piece with its heart thumping through its wretched ribs, the fireplace shivering with a red nose, and the chimney-glass grim and gaunt. Whenever he entered the house of a good person, with a loving, generous heart, he saw the difference—jolly fat chairs, if only of common wood, tables as warm as a toast, and mirrors that gave him a wink of good-humoured greeting. It was all enchantment, due perhaps in a great measure to the strange twist in the vision with which the good Genie was born.

Thus far, perhaps, in a sort of semi-transparent allegory, have we indicated the truth as regards the wonderful genius who has so lately left us. Mighty as was the charm of Dickens, there have been from the beginning a certain select few who have never felt it. Again and again has the great Genie been approached by some dapper *dilettante* of the superfine sort, and been informed that his manner was wrong altogether, not being by any means the manner of Aristophanes, or Swift, or Sterne, or Fielding, or Smollett, or Scott. This man has called him, with some contempt, a 'caricaturist.' That man has described his method of portrayal as 'sentimental.' MacStingo prefers the humour of Galt. The gelid, heart-searching critic prefers Miss Austen. Even young ladies have been known to take refuge in Thackeray. All this time, perhaps, the real truth as regards Charles Dickens has been missed or perverted. He was not a satirist, in the sense that Aristophanes was a satirist. He was not a comic analyst, like Sterne; nor an intellectual force, like

Swift; nor a sharp, police-magistrate sort of humourist, like Fielding; nor a practical-joke-playing tomboy, like Smollett. He was none of these things. Quite as little was he a dashing romancist or fanciful historian, like Walter Scott. Scott found the Past ready made to his hand, fascinating and fair. Dickens simply enchanted the Present. He was the creator of Human Fairyland. He was a magician, to be bound by none of your commonplace laws and regular notions: as well try to put Incubus in a glass case, and make Robin Goodfellow the monkey of a street hurdy-gurdy. He came to put Jane Austen and M. Balzac to rout, and to turn London into Queer Country.

Yes, he was hotheaded as an Elf, untrustworthy as a Pixy, maudlin at times as a lovesick Giant, and he squinted like Puck himself. He was, in fact, anything but the sort of story-teller the dull old world had been accustomed to. He was most unpractical. His pictures distorted life and libelled society. He grimaced and he gambolled. He bewitched the solid pudding of practicality, and made it dance to aërial music, just as if Tom Thumb were inside of it. It is, therefore, as you say, highly inexpedient that his works should be much studied by young people, who must be duly crammed with tremendous first principles; and for a literary Rhadamanthus of two-hundred-horse power, he is absurd reading. Nor should we care to recommend his narratives to the Gradgrinds or the Dombeys of this generation. His stories are so child-like, so absurd, so unwise, so mad. But *such* stories! When shall we

hear the like again? Wiser and greater tale-tellers may come, if to be hard and cold is to be wise and great; but who will lull us once more into such infancy of delight, and make us glorious children once again? The good Genie has gone, and already the wise critics—who speak with such authority, and are so tremendously above being pleasing themselves—are shaking their heads over his grave.

But the amount of the world's interest in Charles Dickens is not to be measured by any quantity of head-shakings on the part of the unsympathetic; and now that the magic has departed, every English home misses the magician. In spite of the small scandal which is spilt over every tea-table, in spite of the shrill yelps of those canine persons who (finding the literary monuments too much like marble to suit their teeth) snap savagely at the great writer's personality, there wells from English life, at the present moment, a light spring of ever-increasing gratitude, having its source very deep indeed. The small critic may still hold that Dickens was a sort of Bavius or Maevius of his day, to be forgotten with the ephemera of his generation; but, then, is it not notorious that the person in question thought Thackeray 'no gentleman,' and finds in the greatest genius of America only the ravings of a madman? With the wrong and right about a great author petulant scribbling has nothing whatever to do. The world decides for itself. And the world decided long ago that Dickens was beyond all parallel the greatest imaginative creator of this generation, and that his poetry, the best of it,

although written in unrhymed speech, is worth more, and will possibly last longer, than all the Verse-poetry of this age, splendid as some of that poetry has been. None but a spooney or a pedant doubts the power.

One question remains, how did that power arise? by what means did it grow? Just as all England had decided that the question was unanswerable up rises Mr. John Forster with his most charming of books, and solves in a series of absorbing chapters the great part of the mystery. It is not without a shock that we are admitted behind the curtain of the good Genie's private life. All is so different from what we had anticipated. The tree which bore fruit as golden as that of the Hesperides was rooted in a wretched soil, and watered with the bitterest possible tears of self-compassion.

We see it all now in one illuminating flash. We see the mightiness of the genius and its limitations. We see why, less than almost any great author, Dickens changed with advancing culture; how, more than ninety-nine out of a hundred men, he acquired the habit of instant observation, false or true; why he imparted to things animate and inanimate the qualities of each other; wherefore all life seemed so odd to him; why, in a word, instead of soaring at once into the empyrean of the sweet English 'classics' (so faultless that you can't pick a speck in them), he remained on the solid pavement, and told elfin and goblin stories of common life. It may seem putting the case too strongly, but Charles Dickens, having crushed into his childish experience a whole world of sorrow and humorous

insight, so loaded his soul that he never grew any older. He was a great, grown-up, dreamy, impulsive child, just as much a child as little Paul Dombey or little David Copperfield. He saw all from a child's point of view—strange, odd, queer, puzzling. He confused men and things, animated scenery and furniture with human souls, wondered at the stars and the sea, hated facts, loved good eating and sweetmeats, fun, and frolic,—all in the childish fashion. Child-like he commiserated himself, with sharp, agonising introspection. Child-like he rushed out into the world with his griefs and grievances, concealing nothing, wildly craving for sympathy. Child-like he had fits of cold reserve, stubborner and crueller than the reserve of any perfectly cultured man. And just as much as little Paul Dombey was out of place at Dr. Blimber's, where they tried to cram him with knowledge, and ever pronounced him old-fashioned, was Charles Dickens out of place in the cold, worldly circle of literature, in the bald bare academy of English culture, where his queer stories and quaint ways were simply astonishing, until even that hard circle began to love the quaint, questioning, querulous, mysterious guest, who would *not* become a pupil. Like little Paul, he was 'old-fashioned.' 'What,' he might have asked himself with little Paul, 'what could that "old-fashion" be, that seemed to make the people sorry? What could it be?'

Never, perhaps, has a fragment of biography wakened more interest and amazement than the first chapters of Mr. Forster's biography. Who that had read the

marvellous pictures of child-life in 'David Copperfield,' and had been startled by their vital intensity, were prepared to hear that they were merely the transcript of real thoughts, feelings, and sufferings; were the literal transcript of the writer's own actual experience—nay, were even a portion of an autobiography written by the author himself in the first flush of his manhood? The pinching want, the sense of desolation, the sharp, agonising pride, were all real, just as real as the sharp, child-like insight into life and character, and the wonderful knowledge of the byways of life.

His first experience was at Chatham, where his father held a small appointment under Government, and here he not only contracted that love for the neighbourhood which abided with him through life, but amassed the material for many of his finest sketches of persons and localities—notably for that extraordinary account of a journey down the river given in 'Great Expectations.' His own account of his life at Chatham, embodied in the fragment of biography before alluded to, is very interesting; and in his autobiographical novel we have a list of the very books he loved—'Tom Jones,' 'Tales of the Genii' (but the tale of the most wonderful Genie of all remained to be told!), 'Arabian Nights,' 'Roderick Random,' 'Humphrey Clinker,' 'Don Quixote,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' and 'Gil Blas.'

Before he was nine years old, however, Dickens was removed to that mighty City over which he was afterwards to shed the glamour of veritable enchantment, and which, from having been the wonder and delight of

his early boyhood, was to arise into the huge temple of his art. The elder Dickens, having procured a situation in Somerset-house, took his family to Bayham Street, Camden Town, and shortly afterwards little Charles was forwarded inside the stage-coach, 'like game, carriage paid.' His recollection of the journey was very vivid. 'There was no other inside passenger,' he relates, 'and I consumed my sandwiches in solitude and dreariness, and it rained hard all the way, and I thought life sloppier than I had expected.' The following passage from Mr. Forster's biography is pregnant with interest, and tells a whole tale of sorrowful change :—

The earliest impressions received and retained by him in London, were of his father's money involvements ; and now first he heard mentioned 'the deed,' representing that crisis of his father's affairs in fact which is ascribed in fiction to Mr. Micawber's. He knew it in later days to have been a composition with creditors, though at this earlier date he was conscious of having confounded it with parchments of a much more demoniacal description. One result from the awful document soon showed itself in enforced retrenchment. The family had to take up its abode in a house in Bayham Street, Camden Town.

Bayham Street was about the poorest part of the London suburbs then, and the house was a mean small tenement, with a wretched little back-garden abutting on a squalid court. Here was no place for new acquaintances to him : no boys were near with whom he might hope to become in any way familiar. A washerwoman lived next door, and a Bow Street officer lived over the way. Many many times has he spoken to me of this, and how he seemed at once to fall into a solitary condition apart from all other boys of his own age, and to sink into a

neglected state at home which had always been quite unaccountable to him. 'As I thought,' he said on one occasion very bitterly, 'in the little back garret in Bayham Street, of all I had lost in losing Chatham, what would I have given, if I had had anything to give, to have been sent back to any other school, to have been taught something anywhere!' He was at another school already, not knowing it. The self-education forced upon him was teaching him, all unconsciously as yet, what, for the future that awaited him, it most behoved him to know.

That he took, from the very beginning of this Bayham Street life, his first impression of that struggling poverty which is nowhere more vividly shown than in commoner streets of the ordinary London suburb, and which enriched his earliest writings with a freshness of original humour and quite unstudied pathos that gave them much of their sudden popularity, there cannot be a doubt. 'I certainly understood it,' he has often said to me, 'quite as well then as I do now.' But he was not conscious yet that he did so understand it, or of the influence it was exerting on his life even then. It seems almost too much to assert of a child, say at nine or ten years old, that his observation of everything was as close and good, or that he had as much intuitive understanding of the character and weaknesses of the grown-up people around him, as when the same keen and wonderful faculty had made him famous among men. But my experience of him led me to put implicit faith in the assertion he unvaryingly himself made, that he had never seen any cause to correct or change what in his boyhood was his own secret impression of anybody whom he had had, as a grown man, the opportunity of testing in later years.

How it came that, being what he was, he should now have fallen into the misery and neglect of the time about to be described, was a subject on which thoughts were frequently interchanged between us; and on one occasion he gave me a sketch of the character of his father which, as I can here repeat

it in the exact words employed by him, will be the best preface I can make to what I feel that I have no alternative but to tell. 'I know my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived in the world. Everything that I can remember of his conduct to his wife, or children, or friends, in sickness or affliction, is beyond all praise. By me, as a sick child, he has watched night and day, unweariedly and patiently, many nights and days. He never undertook any business charge, or trust, that he did not zealously, conscientiously, punctually, honourably discharge. His industry has always been untiring. He was proud of me, in his way, and had a great admiration of the comic singing. But, in the ease of his temper and the straitness of his means, he appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all, and to have utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him in that regard, whatever. So I degenerated into cleaning his boots of a morning, and my own; and making myself useful in the work of the little house; and looking after my younger brothers and sisters (we were now six in all); and going on such poor errands as arose out of our poor way of living.'

In this and other portions of the biography, we are thus directly informed that Mr. Dickens, senior, with his constant pecuniary embarrassments, his easy good nature, his utter unpracticality, sat full length for the immortal portrait of Mr. Micawber; and this fact has already been the signal for much after-dinner comment and for numberless bitter remarks on the part of the unsympathetic. It so happens that Dickens, in his biographical fragment as in his great novel, dwells with all the intensity of an incurably wounded nature on the early privations and trials which (as has been truly observed) made him the great power he was. This, it is

suggested, was, if not positive folly, rank ingratitude; his self-commiseration was contemptible, his after-recrimination atrocious; and it is to be regretted that he was not at once more manly and more gentle. Thus far a small section of the public. Read, now, Dickens's account of his life at the blacking warehouse, where he was sent at the request of a relation :—

It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me—a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally—to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school. Our friends, I take it, were tired out. No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar school, and going to Cambridge.

The blacking warehouse was the last house on the left hand side of the way, at old Hungerford stairs. It was a crazy, tumble-down old house, abutting, of course, on the river, and literally overrun with rats. Its wainscoted rooms and its rotten floors and staircases, and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before me, as if I were there again. The counting-house was on the first floor, looking over the coal barges and the river. There was a recess in it, in which I was to sit and work. My work was to cover the pots of paste-blacking, first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat, all round, until it looked as smart

as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop. When a certain number of grosses of pots had attained this pitch of perfection, I was to paste on each a printed label; and then go on again with more pots. Two or three other boys were kept at similar duty downstairs on similar wages. One of them came up, in a ragged apron and a paper cap, on the first Monday morning, to show me the trick of using the string and tying the knot. His name was Bob Fagin; and I took the liberty of using his name, long afterwards, in Oliver Twist. . . I know I do not exaggerate, unconsciously and unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources and the difficulties of my life. I know that if a shilling or so were given me by anyone, I spent it in a dinner or a tea. I know that I worked from morning to night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I tried, but ineffectually, not to anticipate my money, and to make it last the week through; by putting it away in a drawer I had in the counting-house, wrapped into six little parcels, each parcel containing the same amount, and labelled with a different day. I know that I have lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond.'

At last, this hard life came to an end; how, is explained in this bitter sequel:—

'At last, one day, my father, and the relative so often mentioned, quarrelled; quarrelled by letter, for I took the letter from my father to him which caused the explosion, but quarrelled very fiercely. It was about me. It may have had some backward reference, in part, for anything I know, to my employment at the window. All I am certain of is, that, soon after I had given him the letter, my cousin (he was a sort of cousin, by marriage) told me he was very much insulted about me; and that it was impossible to keep me after that. I cried very much,

partly because it was so sudden, and partly because, in his anger, he was violent about my father, though gentle to me. Thomas, the old soldier, comforted me, and said he was sure it was for the best. With a relief so strange that it was like oppression, I went home.

'My mother set herself to accommodate the quarrel, and did so next day. She brought home a request for me to return next morning, and a high character of me which I am very sure I deserved. My father said I should go back no more, and should go to school. *I do not write resentfully or angrily: for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am;* but I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back.

'From that hour until this at which I write, no word of that part of my childhood which I have now gladly brought to a close, has passed my lips to any human being. I have no idea how long it lasted; whether for a year, or much more, or less. From that hour, until this, my father and my mother have been stricken dumb upon it. I have never heard the least allusion to it, however far off and remote, from either of them. I have never, until I now impart it to this paper, in any burst of confidence with any one, my own wife not excepted, raised the curtain I then dropped, thank God!'

The reader has now before him the whole story, the whole explanation of why, over Charles Dickens, 'ere he is scarce cold,'

Begins the scandal and the cry!

The case is very simple. Charles Dickens, having been greatly unfortunate in his youth, dwelt on the circumstances with an intensity 'almost vindictive'—in other words, with the frightfully realistic power which

especially distinguished the man. Weighing all the circumstances, probing the very core of the truth, we see nothing in this to account for the prevalent misconception. Let us bear in mind, in the first place, the keenness of the author's memory, and the stiletto-like touches of the author's style, both liable to be misunderstood by men with dimmer memories and flabbier styles. Let us remember, next, that Dickens was concocting no mere fiction, but attempting to tell things exactly as they had happened,—to narrate (in his own words) 'the whole truth, so help me God!' Lastly, let us not forget, that the words we have read were no formal public charge, but the rapid instantaneous flashes of a private self-examination, never published until totally disguised and modified. We have more faith in the English public, which has persistently adhered to the great master in spite of the carpings and doubtings of Blimberish persons, than to imagine it will be misled in reading this matter, any more than Mr. Forster has been misled in printing it; and we unhesitatingly assert that, in the autobiographical fragment, there is not one sentence inconsistent with a noble soul, a beneficent mind, and a loving heart. The worst passage is that referring to his mother's desire to send him back to the blacking warehouse. We agree with Dickens that such a desire was cruel almost to brutality (Dickens never *says* so, though he seems to have felt as much), but we affirm, nevertheless, that the language he uses is perfectly tender and lawful. 'I never shall *forget*, I never can *forget*,'—that is all. The impression survived, but had he not tried to

obliterate it a million times? and why?—because, with that reverent yearning nature, he would fain have made himself believe his mother had been completely noble and true to him, because he was too sensitive to do without motherly love and tenderness, because he could not bear to think the one great consecration of childhood had been missing. Such a feeling, we believe, so far from being inconsistent with love, is part of love's very nature. Had he not been filial to the intensest possible degree, he would never have felt an unmotherly touch so sorely. He sits in no judgment, he utters no blame, but to himself, in the recesses of his soul, he cries that he would part with half his fame to feel that that one unkindness had been wanting. 'The pity of it, the pity of it, Iago!'

And *we*, who owe him a new world of love and beauty, we who are to him as blades of common grass to the rose, are we to sit in judgment on our good Genie, because he has bared his heart to us, a little too much, perhaps, in the all-telling candour of a child? God forbid! Shall we cast a stone, too, because (as we are told) he, in one of his leading characters, 'caricatured his own father?' O dutiful sons that we are, shall we spit upon the monster's grave? No. Rather let us, like wise men, read the words already quoted, wherein the great author pictures his father's character in all the hues of perfect tenderness and truth. Rather let us open 'David Copperfield,' and study the character of Micawber again,—to find the queer sad human truth embodied in such a picture as only love could draw, as

only a heart overflowing with tenderness could conceive and feel. MICAWBER! There is light in every lineament, sweetness in every tone, of the delicious creature.

'The very incarnation of selfishness,' it is retorted; 'dishonourable, mean, absurd, gross, contemptible.' But to this there is *no* reply; for Micawber, with all his faults, which are of the very nature of the man, is to us, as to him who limned him for our affection, almost as dear a figure as Don Quixote, or Parson Adams, or Strap, or Uncle Toby.

But this appealing against harsh judgment is thankless work. Far better pass on to those portions of the book which show how Dickens, when a neglected boy, began accumulating the materials for his great works—wandering about Seven Dials, aghast at that theatre of human tragedy of which every threshold was the proscenium; haunting the wharfs and bridges, till the river became a dark and awful friend; visiting the gaffs and shows in the Blackfriars Road, till every feature of low mumming life grew familiar to him; visiting his father in that Marshalsea of which he was to leave so vivid a memorial; watching the cupola of St. Paul's looming through the smoke of Camden Town; dreaming, planning, picturing, until this vast web of London grew, as we have said, enchanted, and life became a magic tale. So intense were the sensations of those days, so vivid were the impressions, that they remained with the author for ever fascinating him, as it were, into one child-like way of looking at the world. Indeed, the sense of oddity deepened as he grew older in years—till

it became almost ghastly, brooding specially on ghastly things, in his last unfinished fragment.[1]

One never forgets how Aladdin, when he got possession of the ring, and, rubbing the tears out of his eyes, accidentally rubbed the ring too, discovered all in a moment his power over spirits and things unseen. Much in the same way did Dickens discover his gift. It was an accidental rub, as it were, when he was crying sadly, that brought the brilliant help. But in his case, unlike that of Aladdin, the power grew with using. The first few figures summoned up in the 'Sketches' were clever enough, but vague and absurdly thin, mere shadows of what was coming. But suddenly, one morning, descended like Mercury the angel Pickwick beaming through his spectacles; and the man-child revelled in laughter, utterly abandoning himself to the maddest mood. He was not as yet quite spell-bound by his own magic, and was merely full of the fun. The tricksy Spirit of Metaphor, which he compelled to such untiring service afterwards, scarcely got beyond such an image as this, in the vulgarising style of 'Tom Jones':—'That punctual servant-of-all-work, the sun, had just risen and begun to strike a light.' But the book was full of quiddity, rich in secret unction. It was in a sadder mood, with the recollections of his hard boyish sufferings still too fresh upon him, that he wrote 'Oliver Twist.' This book, with all its faults, shows what its writer might have been, if he had not chosen rather to be a great magician. Putting aside

[1] See 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood.'

altogether the artificial love story with which it is interblended, and which is the merest padding, there is scarcely a character in this fiction which is not rigidly drawn from the life, and that without the faintest attempt to secure quiddity at the expense of verisimilitude. The character of Nancy, the figures of Fagin and his pupils, the conduct of Sykes after the murder, are all studies in the hardest realistic manner, with not one flash of glamour. Even the Dodger is more life-like than delightful. There are touches in it of marvellous cunning, strokes of superb insight, bits of description unmatched out of the writer's own works; but the lyric identity (if we may apply the phrase to one who, although he wrote in prose, was specifically a poet) had yet to be achieved. The charm was not all spoken. The child-like mood was not yet quite fixed.

Not at the 'Oliver Twist' stage of genius could he have written thus of a foggy November day: 'Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun;' or thus about shop-windows on the same occasion: 'Shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look;' or thus of a sleeping country town, where 'nothing seemed to be going on but the clocks, and they had such drowsy faces, such heavy lazy hands, and such cracked voices, and they surely must have been too slow.' Still less could he have pictured the wonderful figure of little Nell surrounded

by oddities animate and inanimate, and moving through them to a sweet sleep and an early grave. Still less could he have written such an entire description as that of the Court of Chancery in 'Bleak House,' where the fog of the weather penetrates the whole intellectual and moral atmosphere, and renders all phantasmic and ludicrously strange. Yet all these things are seen and felt as a child might have seen and felt them—are just like the world little Dombey or little Nell might have described, if they had wandered as far, and been able to put their impressions upon paper.

It is not to be lost sight of, as being a most significant and striking fact, that Dickens is greatest when most personal and lyrical, and that he is most lyrical when he puts himself in a child's place, and sees with a child's eyes. In the centre of his best stories sits a little human figure, dreaming, watching life as it might watch the faces in the fire. Little Oliver Twist, little David Copperfield, little Dombey, little Pip (in 'Great Expectations'), wander in their turn through Queer Land, wander and wonder; and life to them is quaint as a toy-shop and as endless as a show. And where Dickens does *not* place a veritable child as the centre of his story, as in 'Little Dorrit' or 'Bleak House,' he employs instead a soft, wax-like, feminine, *child-like* nature, like Amy Dorrit or Esther Summerson, which may be supposed to bear the same sort of relation to the world as children of smaller growth, and to feel the world with the same intensity. In any case, in any of his best passages, whether humorous or pathetic, emotion pre-

cedes reflection, as it does in the case of a child or of a great lyric poet. The first flash is seized; the picture, whether human or inanimate, is taken instantaneously and steeped in the feeling of the instant. Thus, when Carker first appears upon the scene in 'Dombey and Son,' the author, with a quick infantine perception, first notices 'two unbroken lines of glistening teeth, whose regularity and whiteness were quite distressing,' and in another moment perceives that in the same person's smile there is 'something like the snarl of the cat.' With any other author but the present this first impression would possibly fade: but with him, as with a child, it grows and enlarges, till the white teeth of Carker absolutely haunt the reader, and in Carker's very look and gesture is seen a feline resemblance. The feeling never disappears for a moment. 'Mr. Carker reclined against the mantelpiece. In whose sly look and watchful manner; in whose false mouth, stretched but not laughing; in whose spotless cravat and very whiskers; *even in whose silent passing of his left hand over his white linen and his smooth face:* there was something desperately cat-like.'

And the further the book proceeds the more is the feline metaphor pursued, so that when Carker is planning the downfall of Edith Dombey we all feel to be watching, with intense interest, a cat in the act to spring. 'He seemed to purr, he was so glad. And in some sort Mr. Carker, in his fancy, basked upon a hearth too. Coiled up snugly at certain feet, he was ready for a spring, or for a tear, or for a scratch, or for a velvet touch, as the

humour seized him. Was there any bird in a cage that came in for a share of his regards?' Nay, so unmistakable is his nature that it even provokes Diogenes the dog; for 'as he picks his way so softly past the house, glancing up at the windows, and trying to make out the pensive face behind the curtain looking at the children opposite, the rough head of Diogenes came clambering up close by it, and the dog, regardless of all soothing, barks and howls, as if he would tear him limb from limb. Well spoken, Di!' adds the author; 'so near your mistress! Another and another, with your head up, your eyes flashing, and your vexed mouth wringing, for want of him. Another, as he picks his way along. You have a good scent, Di,—cats, boys, cats!'

Note, here, the positive *enchantment* which this lyrical feeling casts over every subject with which it deals. There can be no mistake about it—we are in Fairyland; and every object we perceive, animate or inanimate, is quickened into strange life. Wherever the good person goes all good things are in league with him, help him, and struggle for him; trees, flowers, houses, bottles of wine, dishes of meat, rejoice with him, and enter into him, and mingle identities with him. He, literally 'brightening the sunshine,' fills the place where he moves with Fairies and attendant spirits. Read, as an illustration of this, the account of Tom Pinch's drive in 'Martin Chuzzlewit.' But wherever the bad person goes, on the other hand, only ugly things sympathise. He darkens the day; his baleful look transforms every fair thing into an ogre. The door-knockers grin grimly,

the door-hinges creak with diabolical laughter. There is not a grain of good in him, not a gleam of hope for him. He is, in fact, scarcely a human being, but an abstraction, representing Selfishness, Malice, Envy, Sham-piety, Hate; moral ugliness of some sort represented invariably by physical ugliness of another sort. He, of course, invariably gets beaten in the long run. This is all as it ought to be—in a fairy-tale.

The pleasantest creatures in this pleasant dream of life, seen by our good Genie with the heart of a child, are (undoubtedly) the Fools. Dickens loved these forms of helplessness, and he has created the brightest that ever were imagined—Micawber, Toots, Twemlow, Mrs. Nickleby, Traddles, Kit Nubbles, Dora Spenlow, the gushing Flora,[1] and many others whose names will occur to every reader. They are perhaps truer to nature than is generally conceded. The critical criterion finds them silly, and the pathos wasted over them somewhat maudlin. The public loves them, and feels the better for them; for, however wrong in the head, they are all right at heart—indeed, with our good Genie, a strong head and a tender heart seldom go together, which is a pity. There can be no doubt that the creator of these creatures was violently irrational, had an intense distaste for hard facts, and an equally intense love for sentimental chuckle-heads.

[1] Not the least interesting portion of Mr. Forster's life is the part showing us that Dora and Flora are photographs from the life, taken at different periods from the same person, and that this person was regarded by Dickens himself at one time just as Copperfield regarded Dora, and at a later period just as Clennam regarded Mrs. F.!

The heart, the heart, if that beats right,
Be sure the brain thinks true !

It may be observed, in deprecation, that Dickens' good people, and especially his Fools, too often wear their hearts 'upon their sleeves,' and give vent to the disagreeable 'gush' so characteristic of his falsetto pathetic passages, such as the well-known scene between Doctor and Mrs. Strong in 'David Copperfield' :—

'Annie, my pure heart!' said the doctor, 'my dear girl!'

'A little more ! a very few words more ! I used to think there were so many whom you might have married, who would not have brought such charge and trouble on you, and who would have made your home a worthier home. I used to be afraid that I had better have remained your pupil, and almost your child. I used to fear that I was so unsuited to your learning and wisdom. If all this made me shrink within myself (as indeed it did), when I had that to tell, it was still because I honoured you so much, and hoped that you might one day honour me.'

'That day has shone this long time, Annie,' said the doctor, 'and can have but one long night, my dear.'

'Another word ! I afterwards meant—steadfastly meant, and purposed to myself—to bear the whole weight of knowing the unworthiness of one to whom you had been so good. And now a last word, dearest and best of friends ! The cause of the late change in you, which I have seen with so much pain and sorrow, and have sometimes referred to my old apprehension—at other times to lingering suppositions nearer to the truth—has been made clear to-night ; and by an accident. I have also come to know, to-night, the full measure of your noble trust in me, even under that mistake. I do not hope that any love and duty I may render in return will ever make me worthy of your priceless confidence ; but with all this knowledge fresh upon

me, I can lift my eyes to this dear face, revered as a father's, loved as a husband's, sacred to me in my childhood as a friend's, and solemnly declare that in my lightest thought I had never wronged you; never wavered in the love and the fidelity I owe you!'

She had her arms round the doctor's neck, and he leant his head down over her, mingling his grey hair with her dark brown tresses.

'Oh, hold me to your heart, my husband! Never cast me out! Do not think or speak of disparity between us, for there is none, except in all my many imperfections. Every succeeding year I have known this better, as I have esteemed you more and more. Oh, take me to your heart, my husband, for my love was founded on a rock, and it endures!'—(*David Copperfield*, chap. xlv. pp. 402, 403. Charles Dickens' Edition.)[1]

There is, of course, far too much of this sort of thing in Dickens' pictures, but it does not go beyond bad *drawing*. His conception of the pathetic circumstances is always psychologically right, only he has too little experience not to make it theatrical. A child might think such a scene, on or off the stage, very affecting. And why does it only repel grown-up people? For the very reason that it is childishly and absurdly candid, that the speakers in it lack the loving reticence of full-grown natures, that it is full of 'words, words, words,' from which proud and affectionate men and women shrink.

[1] Our references throughout the article are to this edition. To those who find the library edition too expensive, or too cumbrous for common use, we can recommend the 'Charles Dickens.' It has, however, one great blemish, which had better be rectified at once, if it is to be really valuable. There is *no index of chapters or contents* to any of the volumes, so that for all purposes of reference it is almost useless.

Our good Genie's pets were far too fond, children-like, of pouring out their own emotions; they lacked the adult reserve. This is a fault they share with many contemporary creations, such as Browning's 'Balaustion,' whose

> O *so glad*
> To tell you the adventure!

and general guttural liquidity of expression, is quite as bad in itself (and far worse in its place) as anything in Dickens.

Even more precious than the Fools are, in our eyes, the Impostors. What a gallery; alike, yet how different! Pecksniff, Pumblechook, Turveydrop, Casby, Bounderby, Stiggins, Chadband, Snawley, the Father of the Marshalsea! Although a brief inspection of these gentlemen shows them all to belong to the same family, each in turn comes upon us with pristine freshness. They are infinitely ridiculous and quite Elf-like in their moral flabbiness.

And this brings us to one point upon which we would willingly dwell for some time, did space permit us. A great humorist like our good Genie, is the very sweetener and preserver of the earth, is the most beneficent Angel that walks abroad; for it is a most cunning and delightful law of mental perception, that as soon as any figure presents itself to us in a funny light, hate for that figure is impossible. If you have any enemy, and if any peculiarity of his makes you smile or laugh, be sure that you and he are closelier united than you know. Humour and

love are twin brothers, one beautiful as Eros, the other queer as Incubus, but both made of the very same materials; and therefore, to call a man a great humorist is simply to call him the most loving and lovable type of humanity that we are permitted to study and enjoy. And this, all the world feels, was Charles Dickens. It would be hard indeed to over-estimate what this good Genie has done for human nature, simply by pointing out what is odd in it. Here come Hypocrisy, Guile, Envy, Self-conceit; you are ready to spring upon and rend them; yet when the charm is spoken, you burst out laughing. What comical figures! You couldn't think of hurting them! Your heart begins to swell with sneaking kindness. Poor devils, they were made thus; and they are so absurd! Fortunately for humanity, this comical perception has grown with the growth of the world. Mystic touches of it in Aristophanes sweetened the Athenian mind when philosophy and the dramatic muse were souring and curdling, and at the mad laughter of Rabelais the cloud-pavilion of monasticism parted to let the merry sky peep through. But the deep human mirth of the popular heart was as yet scarcely heard. Shakspeare's humour, even more than Chaucer's, is of the very essence of divine quiddity.

Between Shakspeare and Dickens, only one humorist of the truly divine sort rose, fluted magically for a moment, and passed away, leaving the Primrose family as his legacy to posterity. Swift's humour was of the earth, earthy; Gay's was shrill and wicked; Fielding's was judicial, with flashes of heavenlike promise; Smollett's

was cumbrous and not spiritualising; Sterne's was a mockery and a lie (shades of Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman, forgive us, but it is true!); and—not to catalogue till the reader is breathless—Scott's was feudal, with all the feudal limitations, in spite of his magnificent scope and depth. Entirely without hesitation we affirm that there is more true humour, and consequently more helpful love, in the pages of Dickens than in all the writers we have mentioned put together; and that, in *quality*, the humour of Dickens is richer, if less harmonious, than that of Aristophanes; truer and more human than that of Rabelais, Swift, or Sterne; more distinctively unctuous than even that of Chaucer, in some respects the finest humorist of all; a head and shoulders over Thackeray's, because Thackeray's satire was radically unpoetic; certainly inferior to that of Shakspere only, and inferior to *his* in only one respect—that of humorous pathos. It is needless to say that in the last-named quality Shakspere towers supreme, almost solitary. Falstaff's death-bed scene[1] is, taken relatively to the preceding life, and history, and rich unction of Sir John, the most wonderful blending of comic humour and divine tenderness to be found in any book—infinite in its suggestion, tremendous in its quaint truth, penetrating to the very depths of life, while never disturbing the first strange smile on the spectator's face. Yes; and therefore overflowing with unutterable love.

The humour of our good Genie seems, when we begin to analyse it, a very simple matter—merely the knack,

[1] See *King Henry V.*, act ii. scene 3.

as we have before said, of seeing crooked—of posing every figure into oddity. A tone, a gesture, a look, the merest trait, is sufficient; nay, so all-sufficient does the trait become that it absorbs the entire individuality; so that Mr. Toots becomes a Chuckle, Mr. Turveydrop incarnate Deportment, Uriah Heep a Cringe; so that Newman Noggs cracks his finger-knuckles, and Carker shows his teeth, whenever they appear; so that Traddles is to our memory a Forelock for ever sticking bolt upright, and Rigaud (in 'Little Dorrit') an incarnate Hook-Nose and Moustache eternally meeting each other. Enter Dr. Blumber: 'The Doctor's walk was stately, and calculated to impress the juvenile mind with solemn feelings. It was a sort of march; but when the Doctor put out his right foot, he gravely turned upon his axis, with a semicircular sweep towards the left; and when he put out his left foot, he turned in the same manner towards the right. So that he seemed, at every stride he took, to look about him as though he were saying, "Can anybody have the goodness to indicate any subject, in any direction, on which I am uninformed?"' Enter Mr. Flintwinch: 'His neck was so twisted, that the knotted ends of his white cravat actually dangled under one ear; his natural acerbity and energy always contending with a second nature of habitual repression, gave his features a swollen and suffused look; and altogether he had a weird appearance of having hanged himself at one time or other, and of having gone about ever since, halter and all, exactly as some timely hand had cut him down.'

This first impression never fades or changes as long as we see the figure in question.

Akin to this perception of Oddity, and allied with it, is the perception of the Incongruous. Never did the brain of human creature see stranger resemblances, funnier coincidences, more side-splitting discrepancies. This man was for all the world like (what should he say ?) a Pump, the more so as his feelings generally ran to water ! That man was a Spider, such a comical Spider—'horny-skinned, two-legged, money-getting, who spun webs to catch unwary flies, and retired into holes until they were entrapped.' Yonder trips the immaculate Pecksniff, 'carolling as he goes, so sweetly and with so much innocence, that he only wanted feathers and wings to be a Bird.'

The summer weather in his bosom was reflected in the breast of nature. Through deep green vistas, where the boughs arched overhead, and showed the sunlight flashing in the beautiful perspective ; through dewy fern, from which the startled hares leaped up, and fled at his approach ; by mantled pools, and fallen trees, and down in hollow places, rustling among last year's leaves, whose scent woke memory of the past, the placid Pecksniff strolled. By meadow gates and hedges fragrant with wild roses ; and by thatch-roofed cottages, whose inmates humbly bowed before him as a man both good and wise ; the worthy Pecksniff walked in tranquil meditation. The bee passed onward, humming of the work he had to do ; the idle gnats, for ever going round and round in one contracting and expanding ring, yet always going on as fast as he, danced merrily before him ; the colour of the long grass came and went, as if the light clouds made it timid as they floated through the distant air. The birds, so many Pecksniff consciences,

sang gaily upon every branch; and Mr. Pecksniff paid *his* homage to the day by enumerating all his projects as he walked along.—*Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. 302.

Here, as elsewhere, the whole power lies in the incongruity of the whole comparison, in the reader's perfect knowledge that Pecksniff is a Humbug and an Impostor, and that there is nothing bird-like or innocent in his nature. The vein once struck, there was nothing to hinder our good Genie from working it for ever. His path swarmed with oddities and incongruities; Wagner-like he mixed these elements together, and produced the Homunculus, Laughter. And just as the perception of oddity and incongruity varies in men, varies the enjoyment of Dickens. Quiddity for quiddity—the reader must give as well as receive; and if the faculty is not *in* him, he will turn away contemptuously. A weasel looking out of a hole is enough to convulse some people with laughter; they see a dozen odd resemblances. Other people, again, walk through all this Topsyturvyland with scarcely a smile. Life in all its phases, great and small, seems perfectly congruous and ship-shape; much too serious a matter for any levity.

But it is time we were drawing these stray remarks to a close, or we may be betrayed into actual criticism—a barbarity we should wish to avoid. Truly has it been said, that the only true critic of a work is he who enjoys it; and for our part, our enjoyment shall suffice for criticism. The Fairy Tale of Human Life, as seen first and last by the good Genie of Fiction, seems to us far too delightful to find fault with—just yet. A hundred years

hence, perhaps, we shall have it assorted on its proper shelf in the temple of Fame. We know well enough (as, indeed, who does not know ?) that it contains much sham pathos, atrocious bits of psychological bungling, a little fine writing, and a thimbleful of twaddle ; we know (quite as well as the critical know) that it is peopled, not quite by human beings, but by Ogres, Monsters, Giants, Elves, Phantoms, Fairies, Demons, and Will-o'-the-Wisps ; we know, in a word, that it has all the attractions as well as all the limitations of a Story told by a Child. For that diviner oddity, which revels in the Incongruity of the very Universe itself, which penetrates to the spheres and makes the very Angel of Death share in the wonderful laughter, we must go elsewhere—say to Jean Paul. Of the Satire, which illuminates the inside of Life and reveals the secret beating of the heart, which unmasks the Beautiful and anatomises the Ugly, Thackeray is a greater master ; and his tears, when they do flow, are truer tears. But for mere magic, for simple delightfulness, commend us to our good Genie. He came, when most needed, to tell the whole story of life anew, and more funnily than ever ; and it seems to us that his child-like method has brightened all life, and transformed this awful London of ours—with its startling facts and awful daily phenomena—into a gigantic Castle of Dream. And now, alas ! the magician's hand is cold in death. What a liberal hand that was, what a great heart guided it, few knew better than the writer of this paper.

But he is fled
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn

Robes in its golden beams,—ah! he is fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said in the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty earth,
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice; but he is fled—
He can no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to him
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now he is not![1]

Now, all in good time, we get the story of his life; and let us hesitate a little, and know the truth better, ere we sit in judgment. Against all that can be said in slander, let our gratitude be the shield. Against all that may have been erring in the Man (few, nevertheless, to our thinking, have erred so little), let us set the mighty services of the Writer. He was the greatest work-a-day Humorist that ever lived. He was the most beneficent Good Genie that ever wielded a pen.

[1] Shelley's 'Alastor.'

## *TENNYSON, HEINE, AND DE MUSSET.*

'THE proof of a poet,' writes the bard of American democracy, 'must be sternly delayed until his country absorbs him as affectionately, as he, in the first instance, has absorbed it.'[1] The last final consecration, after all, is the approval of the people, or of that section of the people to which the poet specially appeals; and not until that consecration is given can a poet justly be deemed prosperous, or adequate, or puissant as a vital force.

Sometimes, as in the cases of Burns and Byron, and Alfred Tennyson, the poet, 'absorbed' instantaneously, lives to see the seeds of his own intelligence springing up around him in a hundred startling and wonderful forms; and to feel that, whether or not the honour accorded to him be adequate to the influence he is exerting, he has at least moved the heart and illuminated the mind of his generation. At other times, as in the cases of Shelley, Whitman, and Browning, the

[1] I am quite aware that I am only interpreting this passage in its smaller and more simple sense. Whitman means that every true poet assimilates the forces around him and fabricates them into form, and that the poet's work, in its turn, is 'absorbed' back into the original forces, plus the colouring force of the poet's imagination.

absorption, although it is no less complete, takes place in so circuitous a fashion, by means of so many intellectual ducts and go-betweens, and is, moreover, often delayed so late, that the public may well be ignorant of the debt it owes to the poets in question; and the poets, in their turn, may well doubt the extent and value of their own influence.

Almost from the commencement, Alfred Tennyson has been recognised as a leading English poet; and his name has been ripening, as all good things ripen, from day to day. On the other hand, the Laureate's only formidable English rival, the thinker who is now recognised as the mighty Lancelot to our poetic Arthur,—we mean, of course, Robert Browning,—was publishing poetry for thirty years, without half the fame, or one quarter the success, enjoyed in turn by each new ephemeron of the season; and when, a few years ago, he published his collected works, a new generation plunged with wonder into a poetic gold-mine, of which the preceding generation had scarcely told them one syllable. Shelley is to this day a secret rather than a mighty force. To praise Whitman to the British critic is like preaching a new religion to Bishop Colenso's savage. Yet he would be rash, indeed, who said that Shelley and Browning have wasted their time and missed the final consecration, or that Whitman should be silent because he has to be explained like a novel religious system. It is curious, doubtless, to see the public heaping all their gratitude in one vast shower of roses and yellow gold at one man's feet, while good men and true, to

whom so much is owing, stand aside comparatively unrecognised and unappreciated. Still, even fame and recognition do not necessarily imply prosperity personally. Heine lies dying for years in his Parisian garret, while all Germany recognises him as her greatest poet since Goethe. After all, there are compensations; and he who is not content to give his best to the world, without too eager a clamour for recompense, has possibly no gift to offer which posterity will consider worth the having.

And, meanwhile, we in England here may well rejoice that the British public is right for once, and that, instead of consecrating some later Blackmore or Shadwell, instead of using the laurel to bind over flattery or to glorify mediocrity, it has at last,—nay for the second time; for did not Wordsworth immediately precede?—done eager honour to a great English poet—one whose works are above all impeachment from any platform, and whose genius is at least as certain of immortality in England as that of Heine in Germany, or that of Alfred de Musset in France.

What is this charm to which wise and foolish yield alike, which warms the hearts of bishops and portly deans, which persuades the smug man of science into approval, which delights youths and maidens, which excites the envy of poets and the despair of scholars? What is the quality of this nectarine drink, that it quickens pulses in those who deem Shelley hysterical and Wordsworth wearisome in the extreme? Why have critics loved Tennyson from the first, and why is

the entire British public learning to love him too? Questions readily put, but exceedingly difficult to answer. Much, perhaps, is due to the fact that Tennyson came just in time to reap the harvest sown by those poets of whom he is, in a sense, the direct product,—Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats,—poets whose literary charms society was slow to feel till it flowered forth into the perfect speech of the present Laureate. A great deal, doubtless, is due to the thoroughly unimpeachable and middle-class tone of the scenery, the sentiments, and (for the most part) of the subjects. A little, also, has been due to the limpid delicacy of the style, which, though ornate in a certain sense, owes nothing to meretricious ornament and little to fanciful affectation.

On all literary points, and particularly on all points affecting poetry, the British public is particularly stubborn. No amount of critical remonstrances, for example, has ever been able to convince it that poetry is a serious business, absorbing all the forces of life, and apt, at times, to be terrible and startling as well as bewitching and pleasing. Poetry, to please it, must be, above all things, 'beautiful,'—a love-plant twining round the abode of Virtue and festooning with its pleasant flowers the garden of the domestic idea. Anything shocking, anything broad, and coarse, anything dull and tedious, is by it forbidden. It has never really liked Wordsworth. It believes to this day that Shelley was a wicked person, and it derives no real satisfaction from his poems generally, notwithstanding its admiration for the 'Ode to a Skylark,' 'The Cloud,' and a few other lyrical

pieces. It still likes the 'Rape of the Lock' and other poetry of the classical English period. Nothing to this hour has shaken its faith in Byron, in spite of all his follies and vices, because, in the first place, he was a lord, and because, in the second place, his sort of writing, with its rapid free-hand-drawing, really pleased.

Is this sarcasm? asks the suspicious reader. By no means. We are simply repeating, word for word, the charge of the small critic against Tennyson,—the charge, in one word, that his poetry is perfectly innocent and refined, such as any English gentleman might write if he had the brains; and I am repeating it for one single purpose, that of showing its shallowness and its absurdity. In poetry as in real life it is the easiest thing in the world to be original and outrageous. Any one can create a sensation in life by simply dressing in a sack and walking down the public streets, or in literature by choosing a horrid subject and treating it in a horrid manner. Attention is at once drawn to a person who gibbers like an ape, or to a poet who clothes his ideas in the most fantastic and unnatural form human ingenuity can devise. But the peculiarity of the English gentleman, of the truest and best type of the class, is that he is *above* all meretricious peculiarity. Quiet, unassuming, reticent, full of culture, armed at all points with the weapons of manhood, graceful, strong, winning his way by courteous self-abnegation, gaining his right when necessary by inexorable will, the English gentleman moves among his fellows and takes his place in the world by simple natural law.

Sir Walter Raleigh was an English gentleman. The Earl of Surrey was another. Sir Thomas More, John Milton, George Herbert, were English gentlemen: all men with refined and quiet manners covering a more or less tremendous stock of reserve strength. What these men were, and what the true English gentleman ever has been, is Tennyson as a poet. He is above all devices and tricks, just as he is above all indecencies. He despises nothing that is noble in culture, not even that red rag of young John Bull's—the domestic idea. He loves beauty, both of form and colour. He has the national instinct highly developed; witness his war songs and calls to arms. His curiously calm manner looks like affectation to some, who think that a swagger would be more natural. His is a gloved hand; but put your hand in it, and you are imprisoned as in a vice. His is a refined face, not twitching in a chronic fury of trouble and denunciation; but watch it when the time comes, and you will see what power it hides. He has the rarest of all courage —the courage to be reverent. For all these qualities, and for the mighty quality of genius superadded, the British nation loves him; and the British nation is right.

From the first hour to the last of his literary life, the Poet Laureate has condescended to no tricks.

> I do but sing because I must,
> And pipe but as the linnets sing!

he wrote in 'In Memoriam;' and to him verse has been

all-sufficient to express the utmost culture of the time. Wonderful as his productions have been, they have never failed to leave the impression of reserved strength, of forces severely restrained in spite of the greatest possible temptation to exert them. His calm is the calm of self-command. With the fine English horror of spasmodic and transient ebullitions, he has always avoided hasty speech. Underneath all this, behind a style perhaps the most graceful achieved by any English poet, lies the greatest capacity for passion and the finest sensibility to pain. But to wail, as certain continental poets have wailed, to swell the lyrical scream which has been going on in Europe for a century, *that* would be too contemptible. We can readily imagine that the intensest feelings of this poet's life, the most heart-rending sorrows of his career, have never found the faintest public voice in his poetry. That he has suffered greatly, that his measure of trial has been full again and again, there are a thousand signs in his writings; but never once has he rushed into print with his grief, and lashed his breast in the feeble craving for public sympathy. It has been objected to 'In Memoriam' that it lacks the touch of deep human agony,—is, in fact, far too philosophic to be the natural voice of strong regret. To us as to many others, this absence of storm is the poem's noblest artistic charm.

It would have been easy indeed for the author of 'Locksley Hall' or 'Love and Duty' to have written such a monody as would have wrung the heart and startled the soul; but he chose the nobler task,—and far

too proud and sensitive to rush into the market-place with his hot grief, he waited until the first sharp agony was over, and the subtle euphrasy of grief had tranquillised the vision for nobler and more delicate perception of all mundane concerns. Grief has had a million tongues, from the cry of David downwards; but never before had any poet found the strength to hush himself in the dark hour, waiting and watching till unbroken utterance was possible, and all the clear divine *issues* of sorrow were discovered.

I woo your love: I count it crime
To mourn for any overmuch;
I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had master'd Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
Eternal, separate from fears;
The all-assuming months and years
Can take no part away from this.

'In Memoriam' is something better than a shower of tears; it is a rainbow on a grave; a thing that, in its divine mission, has lightened a thousand tombs, and brought the true philosophic calm to a thousand mourners. In one lyric on the same subject there is a touch of awful reticence, finer than any cry, a silent beat of the strong heart in a grief too deep for tears:—

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!

Wintry desolation and silent anguish speak in every

line, but there is no wailing,—only the sad wash of the inevitable grief which is now and has been from the beginning.[1]

It would be absurd to say that the loss of Arthur Hallam has been the greatest sorrow of Mr. Tennyson's life; no loss of a mere friend, however dear and precious, can match some other losses that are felt by most of us who attain manhood; but for open indications of that acuter suffering which makes a great soul, we shall look in vain, unless we look very deep indeed. One thing is certain, this fine poetic strength, this white marble of literature, has not been deposited without great volcanic troubles. Tennyson, like Goethe, has had his Sturm-und-Drang period; but about that, very wisely, he has been silent. Meanwhile, it is ludicrously amusing to see certain critics confounding the noble self-command of a strong poet with the cold-blooded indifference of a small lyrist. To some people, howling is agony, and roaring a sigh of power. Here, you see, the British public is right again. Howling and roaring are intolerable to it, either on the part of gentleman or poet, and it will not have this pleasant island turned into a lazaretto.

For, after all, does much good come of apotheosizing

[1] Taine's criticism on 'In Memoriam' is extremely flippant, quite missing the real significance of the poem. 'It is written,' says the French historian of English literature, 'in praise and memory of a friend who died young, is cold, monotonous, and often too prettily arranged. He goes into mourning; but like a correct gentleman, with bran new gloves, wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief, and displays throughout the religious service, which ends the ceremony, all the compunction of a respectful and well-trained layman.'

sorrow, and representing life as a short night illuminated by dimly glimmering stars, such as memory and religion? Is not the physical world very lovely, and has not the moral world many a sunbeam? English sentiment says so; and English sentiment is right again. So, when the Poet Laureate speaks another portion of his charm, and describes the leafy lanes, the breezy downs, the copsy villages, and the pleasant pastoral life of England, everybody is delighted to listen.

Not even Milton, the best of our landscape poets, caught the delicate tints and subtle nuances of English scenery more truly than does our Laureate. In those supremely beautiful productions, 'L'Allegro,' and 'Il Penseroso,' and in some lines of 'Lycidas,' there is the finest Turneresque picturing to be found in our poetry. A subtle phrase, a word, an adjective, is used to summon up the scene. Look close into the line, and the effect seems perhaps vague and smudgy; but draw back the required distance, and how lovely all appears.

> Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
> Under the *opening eyelids*[1] of the morn,
> We drove afield, and both together heard
> What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn.

Every word breathes the sentiment of landscape. In the same delicious spirit do we see the 'dappled dawn arise,' while 'the cock scatters the rear of darkness thin,'

> And the ploughman near at hand
> Whistles o'er the furrowed land;

[1] In Milton's original MS., '*glimmering* eyelids.'

And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe.

All our senses are satisfied—sight, sound, smell—as the dewy morning grows. Equally cunning and sweet is the wonderful night-picture, conjured up with such tones as these :—

Oft, on a plot of rising ground,
I hear the far-off Curfew sound,
*Over some wide-water'd shore,*
*Swinging slow with sullen roar.*

Akin to tones like these, with their exquisite sensibility to natural effects, are a thousand passages in the writings of Tennyson. From the time when, in his first little volume, he sang how

*cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn*
About the lonely moated grange,

and how

the *thick-moted sunbeam* lay
Athwart the chambers,

till the time when, late in life, he described

The chill
November dawns, and *dewy-glooming downs*,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
*And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas*,

from first to last Mr. Tennyson has excelled in a sort of word-painting which brings to simple perfection the Miltonic manner. Who does not recognise the Tennysonian touch in little glimpses such as this of autumn ?

Autumn, *with a noise of rooks,*
*That gather in the waning woods;* [1]

or this of the deepening twilight:

Couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
*Laid their dark arms about the field;*

or this of an English brook:

Uncared for, gird *the windy grove,*
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;
Or *into silver arrows break*
*The sailing moon in creek and cove;*

or this of the moon shining:

O'er the friths that branch *and spread*
*Their sleeping silver thro' the hills.*

In such work there is a cunning which Milton invariably seizes, and Wordsworth generally misses. And Tennyson is akin to the first great Puritan in more than this. He has the same fine self-control, the same austere purity, the same faith in the power of artistic elements to command success for their own sake, as well as for the sake of the thoughts they embody. The Poet Laureate is, in fact,

[1] A fine speciman of this sort of imagery is the vignette of Spring, by Alex. Smith:

pensive Spring, a primrose in her hand,
A solitary lark above her head!

But finest of all, perhaps, is Milton's description of how

the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad votaress in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
*Comus*, v. 188—190.

just as Wordsworth was, a lineal poetic descendant of the poet of the Commonwealth. Although there is in his style at times something of the sumptuous feudal wealth of Shakspeare, and although there is in his thought a constant sympathy with exact science and philosophic materialism, there is nowhere, either in thought or style, a trace of the Shakspearian paganism.

Indeed, we can quite conceive that John Milton, had he lived in the nineteenth century, would have written his epic in the Arthurian form of moral allegory, rather than in the familiar form of traditional theology. Although Tennyson is far too good a poet ever to be avowedly didactic, his highly tempered and powerful Miltonic mind never for a moment ceases to feel the weight of the moral law. For this and for other reasons, a young writer of the present day, in his recently published Essays,[1] talks (we quote from memory) of Tennyson's 'narrowness of ethical range;' but as the same writer is in the same breath echoing the modern delusion that Byron was a great disintegrating force, sent to shake the piggish domesticity of England under the Georges, we do not think he has quite weighed the responsibility attached to such a criticism of Tennyson. No great purifying force comes in the guise of a sham; and Byron was the greatest sham English literature has seen. His attacks on society and on individuals were always insincere; his productions were not merely immoral in the vulgar sense, but theatrical and false in the literary sense; and as for his 'ethical range,' it was that of an actor in a penny show.

[1] Mr. John Morley.

True, he was a great poet, good for rapid reading, fine, dashing, stormy, altogether delightful, but in the matter of 'ethical range,' and in many of the loftier and severer issues of poetry, immeasurably Tennyson's inferior.

Some portions of Tennyson's charm for modern readers have been glanced at. It has been seen that his verse is the literary correlative of the polished courtesy and vast reserve strength of an English gentleman ; that he is too cultured for wild lyrical outbursts of mere personal emotion and passion ; that he has an unequalled sense of the power of a phrase (as Turner had an unequalled sense of the power of the stroke of a brush,) to conjure up landscape ; that this last power has been used for the purpose of making delicious word-pictures of national, or English, scenery ; and that, finally, he belongs to the noblest class of men England has yet succeeded in producing—the English Puritans—the men who, while sacrificing life's blood for freedom of conscience, while keeping ever abreast of thought and progress in every generation, from that of Milton and Marvell to this of Tennyson and Mill, have never lost sight of the higher law which shapes all human ends, have never consented to regard life as merely a frivolous business, have never lacked the impulse to revere, or the will to resist and doubt.

Under the Commonwealth, Tennyson would doubtless have been a religious zealot, a fiery political partisan, and the poet of old theology. Under Queen Victoria, he is a keen man of science, a reserved and retiring private gentleman, and the poet of the higher Pantheism. But in

either case, he would rank as an English Puritan, intolerant of vice, full of the sense of beauty, and bound by the innate sense of reverence and responsibility to worship in some way some higher intelligence than himself, whether the might of the God of Judah, or the mysterious 'Immanence' of the Spinozan conception of God.

Thus much having been said, is all said? Though quite enough has been written to explain why this poet should be the peculiar pride and delight of his generation, much more of his peculiar charm remains to be told.

In the last chapter of his radically unsound and superficial work on English literature, M. Taine strains all his specious descriptive faculty to show that Tennyson is simply a dilettante artist, whose true mission it is to reproduce in exquisite vignettes the finer and more beautiful forms of fairy mythology and elegant domestic life. Taine misses altogether, we think, the true genealogy of this poet, and traces his consanguinity with neither Wordsworth nor Milton. Tennyson is, as we have said, a Puritan of proud and meditative nature, but he superadds the fine Miltonic sense of female beauty to the deep Wordsworthian perception of human worth. Amidst the landscape first outlined by Milton he has placed a bevy of female figures in the fresh and stainless manner of the Miltonic Eve :—

> She, like a wood-nymph light,
> Oread or Dryad, or of Delia's train,
> Betook her to the groves ; but Delia's self
> In gait surpassed, and goddess-like deport,
> Though not as she with bow and quiver arm'd,
> But with such gardening tools as art yet rude,

Guiltless of fire, had form'd, or angels brought.
To Pales, or Pomona, thus adorned,
Likest she seemed: Pomona when she fled
Vertumnus, or to Ceres in her prime,
Yet virgin of Proserpina from Jove.

In a series of exquisite cabinet-pictures, all fresh and original, yet all possessing something of the 'virgin majesty of Eve,' he has painted Lilian, Isabel, Madeline, the Lady of Shalott, Eleanore, the Miller's Daughter, Lady Clara, 'sweet pale' Margaret, the Gardener's Daughter, Dora, Godiva, St. Agnes, Maud, Enid, Elaine, and many other beautiful women of an unmistakably English type. Even Guinevere, in her stately beauty and supreme repentance, is Eve after the Fall, when she beheld the beautiful world first yielding to the bloody consequences of her sin:

Nigh in her sight
The bird of Jove, stoop'd from his aery tour,
Two birds of gayest plume before him drove;
Down from a hill the beast that reigns in wood,
First hunter then, pursued a gentle brace,
Goodliest of all the forest, hart and hind.

In the pages of this third great Puritan poet, we have scarcely a glimpse of any utterly degraded woman. The type is perfect; chastity and beauty reign in each lineament.

Those graceful acts,
Those thousand decencies, that daily flow
From all her words and actions, mixed with love
And sweet compliance.

But what infinite variety! what ever-changing loveliness of form and spirit! The glorious creature illumes the world, and creates a new Paradise. Such as we find her here, she is in life, in a thousand delightful forms of English maid and mother, moving against a green and gentle landscape, sprinkled with stately halls and pleasant homesteads, and kept ever fresh by the breath of the encircling sea.

Tennyson's originality is most conspicuous in this, that he has taken this type of the Miltonic woman, the first condition of whose being is to be beautiful, the second to be pure and chaste; and he has developed out of it a higher and grander reality by colouring it with all the passion Milton lacked, and all the daintiness Wordsworth despised. In Tennyson's women, whatever their situation and degree, there is a sort of immortal maidenhood, a bloom of imperishable virginity, coupled with a rich sensuousness which never verges on sensuality, but is mellow as the flavour of a ripe peach. Milton did not miss the sensuousness (witness the wonderful rush of colour through the ninth book of his 'Paradise Lost'), but he almost resented it in himself, and trembled at its eternal dangers. Wordsworth, on the other hand, never lost sight of the Puritan truth that *maternity* was the woman's consecration; every maid he saw was a prospective mother, burthened with a certain heavy halo of responsibility. Tennyson is fully as chaste as either of his great predecessors; but his women are infinitely more virgin-like. Taken alone, as a set of portraits by a great artist, they would entitle him to a place by the side of Sir

Joshua Reynolds, as a master of colour without one prurient tint or touch.

But just as he had followed Milton in one way, Tennyson has followed Wordsworth in another. Not content with filling his English landscapes with beautiful maidenly figures, he has painted for us, still within the circle of *beauty* to which he has sternly relegated himself, a number of humble figures, with such tales to tell as gently move the heart. His treatment of these figures is not, like that of Wordsworth, a treatment of moral philosophy, nor is it, like that of Dickens, a treatment of beneficence. He has no tenderness in this direction, and little or no humour. He selects no human figure for its own sake ; he is incapable, perhaps, of the almost animal sympathy shown in Wordsworth's 'Two Thieves' and 'Street Musicians,' or of the grim-knitted agony of Coleridge's 'Two Graves' fragment ; but he has succeeded to a wonderful extent in representing, by the figures of which I speak, the relation of simple circumstances to the gigantic issues of Death and Immortality.

With what singular felicity, in the idyl of 'The Brook' does he reveal to us the ebb and flow of human lives, and the fixedness of natural conditions. A landscape is painted for us, and in it a brook singing ; and across that landscape, one by one, to the brook's monotonous chant, the generations rise, speak a little word, and go. We see them come, we feel them fade. We know no art greater than that shown in the close of this poem ; and we do not think the poem, as a whole, can be equalled, in

our language, for simplicity of form and sublimity of issue. Similar in its blending of transient and eternal things is the extraordinary little monologue entitled 'The Grandmother,' where the wavering memories of an aged woman, the bright illuminating flashes on the dark background of decay, the confounding of one generation with another, the drowsy worn-out wish for rest, broken again and again by the sharp feminine echoes of a busy *over-crowded* life, are conveyed in a wonderful manner to the reader's mind, all with the clearest sense of the actually picturesque. Less fine in degree, but welcome for their touches of grim satire, are the 'Northern Farmer' poems. These are studies in George Eliot's manner, with the 'gleam' that the prose-writer's manner always wants.

'Enoch Arden,' too, has considerable merits; but it is too long for the kind of power of which Tennyson is a master, and it does not, as a whole, leave a lofty impression. But all these studies, in what may be called the Wordsworthian manner, are certain of remembrance. Taken one with another, they are amazing products as coming from the same hand which drew the Tennysonian 'beauties,' and wrote 'In Memoriam.' They are highly individual, in so far as they never lose sight of the point of beauty, to which Wordsworth, as a great philosophical poet, is frequently indifferent; but they do not escape from classification under the Wordsworthian group of 'English idyl,' because their subjects seem invariably chosen from conventional country districts, where everything is peculiarly neat and clean, and where there is

carried into all concerns of life a certain primness and preciseness of the moral sense.[1]

In that series of passionate cadences, the poem of 'Maud,' Mr. Tennyson shook off, for a moment as it were, the burthen of his Puritan descent, and indulged in more invective than is usually approved of here in England. M. Taine calls the vein a 'Byronic' one, and thus accounts for its unpopularity; but this is a double blunder, for in the first place 'Maud' is not in the least Byronic, and in the second place, if it had been Byronic, it would certainly have been popular. The studied attitudinising, the strong declaiming, and altogether what we may entitle the 'grand manner' is altogether wanting in this poem; equally wanting is the ingenious diablerie and devil-may-care defiance; and the whole tone rather resembles the more hectic poetry of Shelley than anything else in our language.

'Maud' is full of beauties; it positively blossoms with exquisite expressions; and it is, at times, highly lyrical without being over-shrill. Nothing, perhaps, proves the dulness of the British public in some directions more than the comparatively unsuccessful fate of this poem. We are far from holding, with some critics, that it is the poet's masterpiece: it is far too disjointed for that; and it lacks, moreover, the nobility of theme

[1] Mr. Morley somewhere styles this sort of poetry 'The Clerical Idyl;' but the title, although a clever one, is liable to mislead. In this and other attempts to compose literary 'labels,' Mr. Morley follows the modern French school of criticism, which sacrifices everything to the instinct of symmetrical *classification*, and when a subject does not fall under the pre-arranged heads, is utterly at a loss what to do with it.

essential to a really good work,—the hero being far too hysterical a personage to satisfy common sense, and the story being merely, in spite of its various ramifications of political and social meaning, a dull enough love-tale of that now conventional type which the same writer created in 'Locksley Hall.' Still it is invaluable as revealing to us for a moment the sources of reserve strength in Tennyson, and as containing signs of passion and self-revelation altogether unusual. In a hundred passages, we have glimpses that startle and amaze us. We perceive what stern self-suppression has been exerted to keep the Laureate what he is. We see what a disturbing force he might have been, if he had not chosen rather to be the consecrating musician of his generation.

But a nobler and a finer theme was awaiting treatment. From the beginning, Tennyson had studied with a loving eye the old group of legends clustered round the name of King Arthur, and for many a year he had been working in secret on the book which turns these legends into a colossal allegory. It is interesting to remember that Milton always contemplated a poem on the same theme. In the book which first established his reputation, Mr. Tennyson published that noble torso, 'The Morte d'Arthur,' a poem in which the Miltonic verse is disencumbered of all its unwieldly and superfluous trappings, and brought to the very perfection of lightness and ease, combined with weight and strength. Since then he has published in succession the other portions of his epic. Taken individually, no portion

equals that first published ; but the epic as a finished whole, has a finer effect on the imagination than have any of its detached fragments.

It is one of the favourite dicta of the typical critic of the French Empire, that the greatest art is above all directly moral purposes, and that all work which is intended to serve a didactic end, or does unconsciously obtrude that end, is necessarily inferior. This dictum, essentially true in itself, involves issues transcending the intelligence of the man who utters it most frequently ; for we find M. Taine, like dozens of smaller men, losing sight of the fact that there are two sorts of didactic writing,—the sort leaning to the side of virtue, and the sort leaning to the side of vice. It is very low art to obtrude virtue ; it is equally low art to obtrude vice ; but the first low art has the merit of at least being exerted for good. When we find M. Taine coupling together in the same breath Shakspeare and Goethe as artists of the highest kind, we see where his argument is going to lead him ; and we do really believe that he would like to add to those surnames the name of De Musset.

We hold, however, that George Sand,[1] Gautier, Baudelaire, and all the latest French school of poets and novelists, are *didactic* writers of an unmistakable description, just as didactic, in their own way, as Richardson and Cowper in England, or Augier himself

[1] It must be understood here that I do not allude to George Sand's earlier works, but to those works composed during the second, and demoralised, stage of her intellectual development.

in France, the only difference being that *they* are didactic in the service of Passion and Vice. Over the heads of both groups alike a great artist is bound to soar; and it is clear on the very face of it that Goethe did not, if we judge him by the total amount and quality of his artistic influence. Homer, Shakspeare, Molière, Chaucer, may justly be ranked in the higher category, as artists totally unbiassed and altogether above any undue influence either from the morality or from the revolt of their country and their generation.

Now, it may be asserted that the Arthurian epic, which Mr. Tennyson justly puts forth as his greatest poetical work, is, by its very nature, relegated to the ranks of those books which are written in the service of Virtue. It is, moreover, an Allegory; and that fact would reduce it to very low rank indeed, if it were an Allegory only; but Mr. Tennyson may well retort that it can be read without any allegorical reading between the lines whatever, as a marvellous 'chanson de geste,' or delightful traditional tale; that it contains hardly a line or expression avowedly 'moral,' or out of keeping with mediæval ethics; and that it is, in the highest sense, a record of the simplest human tragedy with elements as universal and as deep as life itself.

Unlike the 'Faëry Queen' in one direction, and utterly unlike the 'Divine Comedy' in another, the epic of Arthur is simple in structure as a crystal, and bright in colour as a sun-illuminated prism. There is no guising of Courtesy, Purity, Passion, Lust, and other vague abstractions, under divers quaint and amusing

dresses; no mummery of the moral Sentiments in the guise of Knights or Naiads, or of the Senses and Vices in the guise of Dwarfs and Satyrs; no riddling, no composing; no representation of reality under the dainty device of a Masque. How beautiful even such a device *may* be made we all know, who have read of

> Heavenly Una and her milk-white lamb!

Nor is there, in the Arthurian epic, any dogmatic ethics or religion, any arbitrary connection with Judaism or technical Christianity; it is not a tale of antique theology or mediæval mystery; it contains no representation of Divine Law under the symbols of a Church. How mighty such symbols may become, as poetic agents, we all know who have read the wonderful story

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe;

or that other dreadful legend beginning—

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura!

Both Dante and Milton were Puritan poets; but Tennyson is a Puritan with the advantages of modern culture. His great work has escaped the old limitations. It is really a tale of human life; it is supremely affecting as a simple narrative, as an exquisite setting of the old legend; and yet, read between the lines, it exhales a fragrance unmistakably didactic. No one closes it without being conscious of the Puritan touch.

The heart is not wrung, but the moral sense is perceptibly heightened.

We confess that this fine poem puzzles us. We cannot conscientiously say that it is an allegory, and yet it has an allegorical complexion. We cannot describe it as didactic, and yet it is full of the strongest teaching. We feel its tenderness and sublimity, and yet we know it is tender and sublime strictly within the circle of English middle-class morality. The question is, must a great poem, in which the artistic sense is never for one moment sacrificed, in which there is the truest and most untrammelled human passion and emotion, and which deals with some of the most disturbing elements of life, be classed as second-rate because the *perfume* it gives forth is unmistakably 'moral?' We think not; but we are not quite sure. Of one point we are quite certain; and it is this—that M. Taine, and many critics in England, who would condemn this *moral* exhalation, would hesitate much less in putting the poem in the front rank if the poem was just the same and gave forth a perfume justly described as *immoral.* There is so much confounding of Didactics and Virtue; as if the affected old thing Didactics were not quite as often to be found in the company of Vice.

Be that as it may, Tennyson need not tremble. Relegated even to the awful company of 'good' books, the epic of Arthur will at least be side by side with the 'Divine Comedy,' 'The Faëry Queen,' the 'Paradise Lost,' and a few other works which human ingenuity, however perfectly tempered by that Art we hear so much

about, will find it difficult to parallel. We do not say, nor do we dream, that it is certain of equal rank with any of these poems. It is yet too near to our eyes to be thoroughly understood. It requires the mellowing of years; and a century hence, it may either have pined away into a sour thin liquor, or have gained the pure and perfect flavour of old wine.

On one point, however, we are quite clear: that in mere matter of *style* the Idyls stand higher than any contemporary or recent poetry, higher even than the same writer's earlier efforts, clear and limpid as they were. Every stage in the Laureate's growth has been an advance in simplicity of speech, and his later Idyls, in spite of some clumsy archaisms, such as 'enow' for 'enough,' are almost perfect in their limpid Saxon. While his imitators are eagerly gathering up and wearing the meretricious finery he threw away long ago, the Poet Laureate has attained to the dignity of such verse as the following:—

THE PARTING OF ARTHUR AND GUINEVERE.

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again.

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die

To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death,
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past, in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives : do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing ! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's : nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand ; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd ; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
" I loathe thee : " yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow :

They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against my sister's son,
Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and knights
Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more,
Farewell!'

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And, in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Note here, that there is not one expression a vulgar reader would style 'poetical,' not one bit of prettiness or ornament; that the sentences are as simply strung together as ordinary speech: and that nearly every word, with the exception of the one epithet 'imperial-moulded' (a Latinism which strikes us as admirable in its sudden burst of contrast), is the purest Saxon. In other passages, Mr. Tennyson has resuscitated old Saxon words of inestimable beauty and force, as well as a few words which were better left alone. Altogether, his great poem is of thoroughly pure form and crystalline transparence. If it were weeded of some scattered archaic expressions and Latinisms, and altogether toned up to the level strength of its finest passages, it would stand as a model of poetic English.

Its charm for the public is the clearness of its narrative and the perfume of its moral. It has completed the

fascination first felt in the English Idyls, strengthened in 'In Memoriam,' and perceptibly weakened on the publication of 'Maud.' The English gentleman again finds voice; the style is full of reticence and dignity, the circumstances pregnant with beauty, the purity and nobility indisputable. The poem is entirely satisfactory, from all points of view, to the being who pronounces public judgments and regulates public successes.

The charm is complete, the poet has triumphed to the extent of human possibility. He is accepted, still living, as the gracefullest modern English poet—as occupying the place in relation to England which in Germany is assigned to Heine and in France is generally conceded to Alfred de Musset. Before quitting the subject, let us look on three pictures, each more or less illuminating the other.

In a quiet set of chambers in the Avenue Matignon, No. 3, Paris, there lingered for eight long years a quaint figure, paralysed to his chair and watching, with an eye where love and jealousy blended, the figure of his wife sewing at his side, while an old negress moved about in household duties. This man spent most of his time in composition, using alternatively the French and the German tongues. He had few friends and not many visitors. His life was lonely, his heart was sad, and he uttered shrill laughter. Though tender and affectionate beyond measure (witness his treatment of his mother, 'the old woman at the Damenthor') he loved to gibe at all subjects, from the majesty of God to the littleness of man. His name was known through all the length of

Germany as the greatest poet after Goethe. His wild, sweet poems were household words. He had sung the wonderful song of the 'Lorelei,' and the delightful ballad of the daughters of King Duncan:

> Mein Knecht! steh' auf und sattle schnell,
> Und wirf dich auf dein Ross,
> Und jage rasch, durch Wald und Feld,
> Nach König Duncan's Schloss!

He was the author of the most dreadfully realistic poem of modern times, the fragment entitled 'Ratcliffe,' where we have the terrible meeting of two who 'loved once:'

> 'Man sagte mir, Sie haben sich vermählt?'
> 'Ach ja!' sprach sie gleichgültig laut und lachend,
> 'Hab' einen Stock von Holz, der überzogen
> Mit Leder ist, Gemahl sich nennt; doch Holz
> Ist Holz!'—*Und klanglos widrig lachte sie, &c.*[1]

He had (not to speak of his other achievements) been the German lyrical poet of his generation. On February 17, 1856, he died, and the only persons of note who attended his funeral were Mignet, Gautier, and Alexander Dumas. This man was Heinrich Heine, author of the 'Buch der Lieder' and the 'Romanzero.'

At the same period there was moving in the heart of Paris another poet, who was to France what Heine was

[1] 'They tell me thou art *married*?'
'Ah, yes!' she said, indifferently, and laughing,
'A wooden stick I have, with leather cover'd,
And called a Husband! Still, wood is but wood!'
And here she broke to hollow, empty laughter, &c.

We know few poems more powerfully affecting the imagination, by more terribly simple means, than this piece of bitter psychology.

to Germany, and perhaps something more. In verses of the most delicate fragrance he had chronicled the lives and aspirations, the ennui and despair, of the inhabitants of the most cultured and debased city under the sun. He had exhausted life too early, like most Frenchmen. His fellow-beings had listened with him, in the theatre, to Malibran, and sighingly exclaimed in his words that, in this world,

Rien n'est bon que d'aimer, n'est vrai que de souffrir !

They had listened delightedly to the talk of his two seedy dilettantes, who exchange notes together inside the cabaret, and finally disappear in a fashion worthy of Montague Tigg in his adversity :

DUPONT.

Les liqueurs me font mal. Je n'aime que la bière.
Qu'as-tu sur toi ?

DURAND.

Trois sous.

DUPONT.

Entrons au cabaret.

DURAND.

Après vous !

DUPONT.

Après vous !

DURAND.

Après vous, s'il vous plaît ![1]

They had beaten time to his delicious song of 'Mimi Pinson :'

[1] *Poésies nouvelles*, p. 116.

Mimi Pinson est une blonde,
Une blonde que l'on connaît;
Elle n'a qu'une robe au monde,
Landerirette!
Et qu'un bonnet!

They had seen him, as his own Rolla, enter the Rue des Moulins, where his little mistress will greet him with a kiss. Poor little thing! her body is bought and sold; and yet, see! she is lying in sweet and innocent sleep:

Est-ce sur de la neige, ou sur une statue,
Que cette lampe d'or, dans l'ombre suspendue,
Fait onduler l'azur de ce rideau tremblant?
Non, la neige est plus pâle, et le marbre est moins blanc,
C'est un enfant qui dort.—Sur ses lèvres ouvertes
Voltige par instants un faible et doux soupir,
Un soupir plus léger que ceux des algues vertes
Quand, le soir, sur les mers voltige le zéphyr,
Et que, sentant fléchir ses ailes embaumées
Sous les baisers ardents de ses fleurs bien-aimées,
Il boit sur ses bras nus les perles des roseaux.
C'est un enfant qui dort sous ces épais rideaux,
Un enfant de quinze ans,—presque une jeune femme.
Rien n'est encor formé dans cet être charmant.
Le petit chérubin qui veille sur ton âme
Doute s'il est son frère ou s'il est son amant.
Ses longs cheveux épars la couvrent tout entière.
La croix de son collier repose dans sa main,
Comme pour témoigner qu'elle a fait sa prière,
Et qu'elle va la faire en s'éveillant demain.
Elle dort, regardez:—quel front noble et candide!
Partout, comme un lait pur sur une onde limpide,
Le ciel sur la beauté répandit la pudeur.

Elle dort toute nue et la main sur son cœur.
N'est-ce pas que la nuit la rende encor plus belle?
Que ces molles clartés palpitent autour d'elle,
Comme si, malgré lui, le sombre Esprit du soir
Sentait sur ce beau corps frémir son manteau noir?

This poet was Alfred de Musset, and those who loved his strange voice, issuing from the lupanar, soon found it fade away. He died in the height of life and power. Whenever we think of him, we think of his own story imitated from Boccaccio.[1] Like Pascal in that story, he was revelling in all the delights of sensual love when, from the flowery couch where he sat with his mistress, he unaware plucked a flower, and held it between his lips as he talked; and alas; the poisonous belladonna crept into his veins, and he fell a corpse, with the words of love on his poor trembling lips.

Turn to the third picture. The scene is England, and the poet, a man of noble private life and simple manners, stands on the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, close to the threshold of a happy English home. He is well-to-do, honoured, beloved. He has risen by sheer force of genius, by sheer delightfulness of lyrical charm, to be the most prosperous singer of his nation. He, too, like Heine and De Musset has painted women; but in his pages, instead of the slender Seraphina, the colossal Diana, the fickle Hortense, and the matronly Yolane (see Heine's group of beauties), and instead of the courtezan Marian, the grisette Mimi Pinson, the Andalusian marquesa, and the Italian Simone (as painted by De Musset), we find such

[1] Simone.

stainless creatures as Elaine, Isabel, and the Miller's Daughter. He, too, has sung of love, no less passionately, but far more purely. He resembles the two others in one point only—the wonderful unaffectedness of his language and the beauty of his versification. It is indeed noticeable that three lyric poets so great should be equally noteworthy for simplicity of poetic form. The literary motto of De Musset may be found in 'Rolla:'

> L'Espérance humaine est lasse d'être mère,
> Et, le sein tout meurtri d'avoir tant allaité,
> Elle fait son repos de sa stérilité.

That of Heine appears in the fresco-sonnets to Christian S——:

> Und wenn das Herz im Leibe ist zerrissen,
> Zerrissen, und zerschnitten, und zerstochen,
> *Dann bleibt uns doch das schöne gelle Lachen!*[1]

But the motto of Tennyson is highest and noblest of all —no mere despair, no mere mockery; and it may be taken in these words from 'In Memoriam:'

> Thou seemest human and divine,
> The highest, holiest manhood, Thou:
> *Our wills are ours, we know not how;*
> *Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.*

One may well rejoice that the highest flower of intellectual life in this country, unlike the products in those other countries, owes its charm to feelings at once so reverent and so pure.

[1] And when the very heart is torn asunder,
Torn up, and stabb'd, and hack'd in pieces after,
We still have power to keep a fine shrill Laughter!

One word in conclusion. As Alfred de Musset and Heinrich Heine showed their originality chiefly by bringing to perfection the thoughts of many generations of lyrical poets, so Alfred Tennyson is chiefly noticeable as the last and most perfect product of the ideal poets of England. Deficient in creative power, he is the lyric embodiment of our highest and purest culture. No English singer can work in the same direction, certainly not by *inverting* the Tennysonian method, and being as impure as he is pure. If English poetry is to exist, to be perpetuated, it must absorb materials as yet scarcely dreamed of; it must penetrate deeper into not merely national life, but into cosmopolitan being; it must cast over some amount of formal culture and accept whatever help the shapeless spirit of the Age can bring it.

The finest lyrical cry has been heard; the clearest cultured utterance has been attained. Of Tennyson it may surely be said, in the words of Carlyle: 'Nay, the finished Poet is, I remark, sometimes, a symptom that his Epoch itself has reached perfection and is finished; that before long there will be a new Epoch, new Reformers needed.' Let that Epoch advance; but meanwhile let us bow in homage, again and again, before the completed product of the Epoch just past. The Poet to come may be and must be different; he certainly cannot be more beautiful and simple; and let us pray, with all our hearts, that he may sing in as noble a spirit as he who (like that other who just preceded him) has 'uttered nothing base.'

## *BROWNING'S MASTERPIECE.*

'THE Ring and the Book' is certainly an extraordinary achievement—a poem of some 20,000 lines on a great human subject, darkened too often by subtleties and wilful obscurities, but filled with the flashes of Mr. Browning's genius. We know nothing in the writer's former poems which so completely represents his peculiarities as this enormous work, which is so marked by picture and characterisation, so rich in pleading and debating, so full of those verbal touches in which Browning has no equal, and of those verbal involutions in which he has fortunately no rival. Everything Browningish is found here—the legal jauntiness, the knitted argumentation, the cunning prying into detail, the suppressed tenderness, the humanity—the salt intellectual humour—a humour not open and social, like that of Dickens, but with a similar tendency to caricature, differing from the Dickens tendency just in so far as the intellectual differs from the emotional, with the additional distinction of the *secretive* habit of all purely intellectual faculties.

Secretiveness, indeed, must be at once admitted as a prominent quality of Mr. Browning's power. Indeed it

is this quality which so fascinates the few and so repels the many. It tempts the possessor, magpie-like, to play a constant game at hiding away precious and glittering things in obscure and mysterious corners, and—still magpie-like—to search for bright and glittering things in all sorts of unpleasant and unlikely places. It involves the secretive chuckle and the secretive leer. Mr. Browning's manner reminds us of the magpie's manner, when, having secretly stolen a spoon or swallowed a jewel, the bird swaggers jauntily up and down, peering rakishly up, and chuckling to itself over its last successful feat of knowingness and *diablerie*. However, let us not mislead our readers. We are not speaking now of Mr. Browning's style, but of his intellectual habit. The mere style is singularly free from the well-known faults—obscurity, involution, faulty construction ; with certain exceptions, it flows on with perfect clearness and ease ; and any occasional darkness is traceable less to faulty diction than to mental super-refining or reticent humour. The work as a whole is not obscure.

We are not called upon—it is scarcely our duty—to determine in what degree the inspiration and workmanship of 'The Ring and the Book' are poetic as distinguished from intellectual : far less to guess what place the work promises to hold in relation to the poetry of our time. We scarcely dare hope that it will ever be esteemed a great poem in the sense that 'Paradise Lost' is a great poem, or even in the sense that 'Lear' is a great tragedy. The subject is tragic, but the treatment is not dramatic : the 'monologue,' even when perfectly

done, can never rival the 'scene;' and Mr. Browning's monologues are not perfectly done, having so far, in spite of the subtle distinction in the writer's mind, a very marked similarity in the *manner* of thought, even where the thought itself is most distinct.

Having said so much, we may fairly pause. The rest must be only wonder and notes of admiration. In exchange for the drama, we get the monologue—in exchange for a Shakspearean exhibition, we get Mr. Browning masquing under so many disguises, never quite hiding his identity, and generally most delicious, indeed, when the disguise is most transparent. The drama is glorious, we all know, but we want this thing as well;—we must have Browning as well as Shakspeare. Whatever else may be said of Mr. Browning and his work, by way of minor criticism, it will be admitted on all hands that nowhere in any literature can be found a man and a work more fascinating in their way. As for the man—he was crowned long ago, and we are not of those who grumble because one king has a better seat than another—an easier cushion, a finer light—in the great Temple. A king is a king, and each will choose his place.

The first speaker is Mr. Browning himself, who describes how on a certain memorable day in the month of June, he fished out at an old stall in Florence—from amidst rough odds and ends, mirror-sconces, chalk drawings, studies from rude samples of precious stones, &c., a certain square old yellow book, entitled, 'Romana Homicidiorum,' or, as he translates it—

—— A Roman murder-case:
Position of the entire criminal cause
Of Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
With certain Four the cut-throats in his pay,
Tried, all five, and found guilty and put to death,
By heading or hanging as befitted ranks,
At Rome on February Twenty-Two,
Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety Eight:
Wherein it is disputed if, and when,
Husbands may kill adulterous wives, yet 'scape
The customary forfeit.

The bare facts of the case were very simple. Count Guido Franceschini, a poor nobleman fifty years of age, married Pompilia Comparini, a maiden of fourteen—led a miserable life with her in his country house at Arezzo —until at last she fled to Rome in the company of Giuseppe Caponsacchi, a priest of noble birth; and on Christmas Eve, 1698, Guido, aided by four accomplices, tracked his wife to a Roman villa, the home of her putative parents, and there mercilessly slew all three—Pompilia and her aged father and mother. Taken almost redhanded, Guido pleaded justification—that his wife had dishonoured him, and been abetted in so doing by her relatives. A lengthy law case ensued—conducted, not in open court, but by private and written pleading. The prosecutor insisted on the purity of Pompilia, on the goodness of old Pietro and Violante, her parents—the defending counsel retaliated—proof rebutted proof—Pompilia lived to give her deposition, Guido, put to the torture, lied and prevaricated—the priest defended his own conduct—for a month; at the end of which time the

old Pope, Innocent XII., gave final judgment in the matter, and ordered Guido's execution.

Such is the merest outline of the story, given in the introduction. But Mr. Browning has conceived the gigantic idea of showing, by a masterpiece, the essentially relative nature of all human truth—the impossibility of perfect human judgment, even where the facts of the case are as simple as the above. After the prologue, comes the book called 'Half Rome.' A contemporary citizen, in his monologue, comprehends all the arguments of Half Rome—the half which believed thoroughly in Guido's justification. Then another contemporary, a somewhat superior person, gives us the view of 'The Other Half Rome,'—the half which believes in Pompilia's martyrdom, and clamours for Guido's doom. This ends the first volume. We get, in the other volumes, all the other points of view of the great case. First, in 'Tertium Quid,' the elaborated or super-critical view, the 'finer sense o' the city;' next, Guido's own voice is heard, pleading in a small chamber that adjoins the court; then Caponsacchi speaks, the priest—a 'courtly spiritual Cupid'—in explanation of his own part in the affair. Afterwards break in the low dying tones of Pompilia, telling the story of her life; then the trial, with the legal pleadings and counter-pleadings; following that again, the Pope's private judgment, the workings of his mind on the day of deliverance; after the Pope, Guido's second speech, a despairing cry, a new statement of the truth, wrung forth in the hope of mercy; and last of all, Mr. Browning's own epilogue, or final summary of the case

and its bearing on the relative nature of human truth. Here, surely, is matter for a poem—perhaps too much matter. The chief difficulty of course is—to avoid wearying the intellect by the constant reiteration of the same circumstances—so to preserve the dramatic disguise as to lend a totally distinct colouring to each circumstance at each time of narration.

The attempt is perfectly successful, within the limitations of Mr. Browning's genius. Though Mr. Browning's prologue, and 'Half Rome's' monologue, and 'Other Half Rome's' monologue, are somewhat similar in style—in the sharp logic, in the keen ratiocination, in the strangely involved diction—yet they are radically different. The distinction is subtle rather than broad. Yet nothing could well be finer than the graduation between the sharp, personally anxious, suspicious manner of the first Roman speaker, who is a *married man*, and the bright, disinterested emotion, excited mainly by the personal beauty of Pompilia, of the second speaker, who is a *bachelor*. With a fussy preamble, the first seizes the button hole of a friend—whose cousin, he knows, has designs upon his (the speaker's) wife. How he rolls his eyes about, pushing through the crowd! How he revels in the spectacle of the corpses laid out in the church for public view, delighting in the long rows of wax candles, and the great taper at the head of each corpse! You recognise the fear of 'horns' in every line of his talk. Vulgar, conceited, suspicious, voluble, he tells his tale, gloating over every detail that relates in any degree to his own fear of cuckoldage. He is every inch for Guido;—father and

mother deserved their fate—having lured the Count into a vile match, and afterwards plotted for his dishonour; and as for Pompilia—what was she but the daughter of a common prostitute, palmed off on old Pietro as her own by a vile and aged wife? Exquisite is the gossip's description of the Count's domestic *ménage*—his strife with father-in-law and mother-in-law—his treatment of the childish bride. Some of the most delicious touches occur after the description of how the old couple, wild and wrathful, fly from their son-in-law's house, and leave their miserable daughter behind. Take the following :—

> Pompilia, left alone now, found herself;
> Found herself young too, sprightly, fair enough,
> Matched with a husband old beyond his age
> (Though that was something like four times her own)
> Because of cares past, present, and to come:
> Found too the house dull and its inmates dead,
> So, looked outside for light and life.
> And lo
> There in a trice did turn up life and light,
> The man with the aureole, sympathy made flesh,
> The all-consoling Caponsacchi, Sir!
> A priest—what else should the consoler be?
> With goodly shoulder-blade and proper leg,
> A portly make and a symmetric shape,
> And curls that clustered to the tonsure quite.
> This was a bishop in the bud, and now
> A canon full-blown so far: priest, and priest
> Nowise exorbitantly overworked,
> The courtly Christian, not so much Saint Paul
> As a saint of Cæsar's household: there posed he
> Sending his god-glance after his shot shaft,

Apollos turned Apollo, while the snake
Pompilia writhed transfixed through all her spires.
He, not a visitor at Guido's house,
Scarce an acquaintance, but in prime request
With the magnates of Arezzo, was seen here,
Heard there, felt everywhere in Guido's path
If Guido's wife's path be her husband's too.
Now he threw comfits at the theatre
Into her lap,—what harm in Carnival?
Now he pressed close till his foot touched her gown,
His hand brushed hers,—how help on promenade?
And. ever on weighty business, found his steps
Incline to a certain haunt of doubtful fame
Which fronted Guido's palace by mere chance;
While—how do accidents sometimes combine!
Pompilia chose to cloister up her charms
Just in a chamber that o'erlooked the street,
Sat there to pray, or peep thence at mankind.

All the rest is as good. The speaker, with the savage sense of his own danger, and a subtle enjoyment of the poison he fears, dilates on every circumstance of the seduction. He has no sympathy for the wife, still less for the priest—how should he have? He does not disguise his contempt even for the husband—up to the point of the murder, as it is finely put—much too finely for the speaker.

The last passage is perfect:—

Sir, what 's the good of law
In a case o' the kind? None, as she all but says.
Call in law when a neighbour breaks your fence,
Cribs from your field, tampers with rent or lease,
Touches the purse or pocket,—but wooes your wife?

No : take the old way trod when men were men !
Guido preferred the new path,—for his pains,
Stuck in a quagmire, floundered worse and worse
Until he managed somehow scramble back
Into the safe sure rutted road once more,
*Revenged his own wrong like a gentleman.*
Once back 'mid the familiar prints, no doubt
He made too rash amends for his first fault,
Vaulted too loftily over what barred him late,
And lit i' the mire again,—the common chance,
The natural over-energy : the deed
Maladroit yields three deaths instead of one,
And one life left : for where's the Canon's corpse ?
All which is the worse for Guido, but, be frank—
The better for you and me and all the world,
Husbands of wives, especially in Rome.
The thing is put right, in the old place,—ay,
The rod hangs on its nail behind the door,
Fresh from the brine : a matter I commend
To the notice, during Carnival that 's near,
Of a certain what's-his-name and jackanapes
Somewhat too civil of eves with lute and song
About a house here, where I keep a wife.
(You, being his cousin, may go tell him so.)

The line in italics is a whole revelation—both as regards the point of view and the peculiar character of the speaker.

The next monologue, though scarcely so fine as a dramatic study, is fuller of flashes of poetic beauty. In it, there is clear scope for emotion—the wild, nervous pity of a feeling man strongly nerved on a public subject. The intellectual subtlety, the special pleading, the savage irony, are here too, in far too strong infusion, but they

are more spiritualised. This speaker is full of Pompilia, her flower-like body, her beautiful childish face, and he sees the whole story, as it were, in the light of her beautiful eyes.

> Truth lies between : there 's anyhow a child
> Of seventeen years, whether a flower or weed,
> Ruined : who did it shall account to Christ—
> Having no pity on the harmless life
> And gentle face and girlish form he found,
> And thus flings back : go practise if you please
> With men and women : leave a child alone,
> For Christ's particular love's sake !—so I say.

He goes on to narrate, from his own point of view, the whole train of circumstances which led to the murder. Guido was a devil—Pompilia an angel—Caponsacchi a human being, sent in the nick of time to snatch Pompilia from perdition. He rather dislikes the priest, having a popular distrust of priests, especially the full-fed, nobly born ones. Blows of terrible invective relieve his elaborate account of Guido's cruelties and Pompilia's sorrows —his emphatic argument that, from first to last, Pompilia was a simple child, surrounded by plotting parents, brutal men, an abominable world.

Our description and extracts can give no idea of the value of the book as a whole. It is sown throughout with beauties—particularly with exquisite *portraits*, clear and sharp-cut, like those on antique gems ; such as the two exquisite little pictures, of poor battered old Celestine the Confessor and aged Luca Cini, the morbid haunter of hideous public spectacles. Everywhere there is life,

sense, motion—the flash of real faces, the warmth of real breath. We have glimpses of all the strange elements which went to make up Roman society in those times. We see the citizens and hear their voices—we catch the courtly periods of the rich gentlemen, the wily whispers of the priests—we see the dull brainless clods at Arezzo, looking up to their impoverished master as life and light—and we hear the pleading of lawyers deep in the learning of Cicero and Ovid. So far, only a few figures have stood out from the fine groups in the background. In the other volumes, one after another figure takes up the tale; and now the work is finished, we have, in addition to the numberless group-studies, such a collection of finished single portraits as it will not be easy to match in any language for breadth of tone and vigour of characterisation.

The face which follows us through every path of the story is that of Pompilia, with its changeful and moon-like beauty, its intensely human pain, its heavenly purity and glamour. We have seen no such face elsewhere. It has something of Imogen, of Cordelia, of Juliet; it has something of Dante's Beatrice; but it is unlike all of those—not dearer, but more startling, from the newness of its beauty. From the first moment when the spokesman for the 'Other Half Rome' introduces her—

> Little Pompilia, with the patient brow
> And lamentable smile on those poor lips,
> And under the white hospital array
> A flower-like body—

to the moment when the good old Pope, revolving the whole history in his mind, calls her tenderly

My rose, I gather for the gaze of God !

—from the first to the last, Pompilia haunts the poem with a look of ever-deepening light. Her wretched birth, her miserable life, her cruel murder, gather around her like clouds, only to disperse vapour-like, and reveal again the heavenly whiteness. There is not the slightest attempt to picture her as saintly ; she is a poor child, whose saintliness comes of her suffering. So subtle is the spell she has upon us, that we quite forget the horrible pain of her story. Instead of suffering, we are full of exquisite pleasure—boundless in its amount, ineffable in its quality. When, on her sorry death-bed, she is prattling about her child, we weep indeed ; not for sorrow—how should sorrow demand such tears !—but for 'the pity of it, the pity of it, Iago !'—

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
—Better than born, baptized and hid away
Before this happened, safe from being hurt !
That had been sin God could not well forgive :
He was too young to smile and save himself.
When they took, two days after he was born,
My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find.—
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,
Said, 'Why take on so? where is the great loss?
These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,
Only begin to smile at the month's end ;
He would not know you, if you kept him here,

Sooner than that; so, spend three merry weeks
Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout,
And then I bring him back to be your own,
And both of you may steal to—we know where!'
The month—there wants of it two weeks this day!
Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she—
Come to say 'Since he smiles before the time,
Why should I cheat you out of one good hour?
Back I have brought him; speak to him and judge!'
Now I shall never see him; what is worse,
When he grows up and gets to be my age,
He will seem hardly more than a great boy;
And if he asks 'What was my mother like?'
People may answer 'Like girls of seventeen'—
And how can he but think of this and that,
Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush
When he regards them as such boys may do?
Therefore I wish some one will please to say
I looked already old though I was young;
Do I not . . say, if you are by to speak . .
Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least,
Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,
Than the poor Virgin that I used to know
At our street-corner in a lonely niche,—
The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off,—
Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more:
She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.

How happy those are who know how to write!
Such could write what their son should read in time,
Had they a whole day to live out like me.
Also my name is not a common name,
'Pompilia,' and may help to keep apart
A little the thing I am from what girls are.

> But then how far away, how hard to find
> Will anything about me have become,
> Even if the boy bethink himself and ask !

Extracts can do little for Pompilia : as well chip a hand or foot off a Greek statue. Very noticeable, in her monologue, is the way she touches on the most delicate subjects, fearlessly laying bare the strangest secrecies of matrimonial life, and with so perfect an unconsciousness, so delicate a purity, that these passages are among the sweetest in the poem. But we must leave her to her immortality. She is perfect every way : not a tint of the flesh, not a tone of the soul, escapes us as we read and see.

Only less fine—less fine because he is a man, less fine because his soul's probation is perhaps less perfect—is the priest, Giuseppe Caponsacchi. 'Ever with Caponsacchi!' cries Pompilia on her death-bed,

> O lover of my life, O soldier-saint !

And our hearts are with him too. He lives before us, with that strong face of his, noticeable for the proud upper lip and brilliant eyes, softened into grave melancholy and listening awe. What a man had he been, shining at ladies' feasts, and composing sonnets and 'pieces for music,' all in the pale of the Church! In him, as we see him, the animal is somewhat strong, and, prisoned in, pricks the intellect with gall. Little recks he of Madonna until that night at the theatre,

> When I saw enter, stand, and seat herself,
> A lady, young, tall, beautiful, and sad.

Slowly and strangely the sad face grows upon his heart until that moment when it turns to him appealingly for succour, and when, fearless of any criticism save that of God, he devotes his soul to its service.

> There at the window stood,
> Framed in its black square length, with lamp in hand,
> Pompilia ; the same great, grave, grieffull air
> As stands i' the dusk, on altar that I know,
> Left alone with one moonbeam in her cell,
> Our Lady of all Sorrows.

The whole monologue of Caponsacchi is a piece of supreme poetry, steeped in lyrical light. The writer's emotion quite overpowers him, and here, as elsewhere, he must *sing*. In all literature, perhaps, there is nothing finer than the priest's description of his journey towards Rome with Pompilia, that night she flies from the horror of Guido's house. Every incident lives before us : the first part of the journey, when Pompilia sits spell-bound, and the priest's eyes are fascinated upon her,—

> At times she drew a soft sigh—music seemed
> Always to hover just above her lips,
> Not settle,—break a silence music too !—

the breaking dawn,—her first words,—then her sudden query—

> 'Have you a mother?' 'She died, I was born.'
> 'A sister then?' 'No sister.' 'Who was it—
> What woman were you used to serve this way,
> Be kind to, till I called you and you came?'

—every look, thought, is conjured up out of the great

heart of the lover, until that dark moment when the cat-eyed Guido overtakes them. What we miss in the psychology Pompilia herself supplies. It is saying little to say that we have read nothing finer. We know nothing whatever of like quality.

Of the twelve books into which it is divided, ten are dramatic monologues, spoken by various persons concerned in or criticizing the Italian tragedy; and the remaining two a prologue and epilogue, spoken in the person of the poet himself. The complete work, therefore, is noticeable for variety of power and extraordinary boldness of design. All the monologues are good in their way, the only ones we could well spare being those of the two counsel, for and against Guido. These, of course, are extraordinarily clever; but cleverness is a poor quality for a man like Robert Browning to parade.

The noblest portions of the book are 'Giuseppe Caponsacchi,' 'Pompilia,' and 'The Pope.' The last-named monologue is wonderfully grand—a fitting organ-peal to close such a book of mighty music; and it rather jars upon us, therefore, that we afterwards hear again the guilty scream of Guido. It seems to us, indeed, if we are bound to find fault at all, that we could have well dispensed with about a fourth of the whole work—the two legal speeches and Guido's last speech. To the two former we object on artistic grounds; to the latter we object merely on account of its extreme and discordant pain. Yet in Guido's speech occurs one of the noblest touches in the whole work—where Guido,

on the point of leaving his cell for the place of execution, exclaims—

> Abate,—Cardinal,—Christ,—Maria,—God. . .
> Pompilia, will you let them murder me?—

thus investing her at the last moment with almost madonna-like power and pity, in spite of the hatred which overcomes him,—hatred similar in kind, but different in degree, to that which Iscariot may be supposed to have felt for the Master. Nor let us forget to record that the poet, in his bright beneficence, has the lyric note even for Guido. We are made to feel that the 'damnable blot' on his soul is only temporary, that the sharp axe will be a rod of mercy, and that the poor, petulant, vicious little Count will brighten betimes, and be saved through the purification of the very passions which have doomed him on earth. No writer that we know, except Shakspeare, could, without clumsy art and sentimental psychology, have made us feel so subtly the divine light issuing at last out of the selfish and utterly ignoble nature of Guido Franceschini.

Fault-finders will discover plenty to carp at in a work so colossal. For ourselves, we are too much moved to think of trifles, and are content to bow in homage, again and again, to what seems to us one of the highest existing products of modern thought and culture. Before concluding, we should notice one point in which this book differs from the plays of Shakspeare—*i.e.* it contains, even in some of its superbest passages, a certain infusion of what Mr. Matthew Arnold once called 'criticism.'

So far from this 'criticism' being a blot upon the book, it is one of its finest qualities as a modern product. We cannot enlarge upon this point here; but we should not conclude without explaining that the work is the more truly worthy to take Shakspearean rank because it contains certain qualities which are quite un-Shakspearean —which, in fact, reflect beautifully the latest reflections of a critical mind on mysterious modern phenomena.

Its intellectual greatness is as nothing compared with its transcendent spiritual teaching. Day after day it grows into the soul of the reader, until all the outlines of thought are brightened, and every mystery of the world becomes more and more softened into human emotion. Once and for ever must critics dismiss the old stale charge that Browning is a mere intellectual giant, difficult of comprehension, hard of assimilation. This great book *is* difficult of comprehension, *is* hard of assimilation: not because it is obscure; every fibre of the thought is clear as day: not because it is intellectual in the highest sense, but because the capacity to comprehend such a book must be spiritual; because, although a child's brain might grasp the general features of the picture, only a purified nature could absorb and feel its profoundest meanings. The man who tosses it aside because it is 'difficult' is simply adopting a subterfuge to hide his moral littleness, not his mental incapacity.

It would be unsafe to predict anything concerning a production so many-sided; but we quite believe that its true public lies outside the literary circle, that men of

inferior capacity will grow by the aid of it, and that women, once fairly initiated into the mystery, will cling to it as a succour, passing all succour save that which is purely religious. Is it not here that we find the supremacy of Shakspeare's greatness? Shakspeare, so far as we have been able to observe, places the basis of his strange power on his appeal to the draff of humanity. He is the delight of men and women by no means brilliant, by no means subtle; while he holds with equal sway the sympathies of the most endowed. A small *intellect* may reach to the heart of Shakspearean power; not so a small *nature*. The key to the mystery is spiritual.

Since Shakspeare we have had many poets—poets, we mean, offering a distinct addition to the fabric of human thought and language. We have had Milton, with his stately and crystal speech, his special disposition to spiritualise polemics, his profound and silent contemplation of heavenly processions. We have had Dryden, with his nervous filterings of English diction. We have had the so-called Puritan singers, with their sweetly English fancies touched with formal charity, like wild flowers sprinkled with holy water. In latter days, we have been wealthy indeed. Wordsworth has consecrated Nature, given the hills a new silence, shown in simple lines the solemnity of deep woods and the sweetness of running brooks. Keats and Shelley caught up the solemn consecration, and uttered it with a human passion and an ecstatic emotion that were themselves a revelation. Byron has made his Epimethean an

somewhat discordant moan. Numberless minor men, moreover, have brightened old outlines of thought and made clear what before was dim with the mystery of the original prophet. In our own time, Carlyle—a poet in his savage way—has driven some new and splendid truths (and as many errors) into the heart of the people.

But it is doubtful, very doubtful, if any of the writers we have named—still less any of the writers we have not named—stands on so distinct and perfect a ground of vantage as to be altogether safe as a human guide and helper. The student of Wordsworth, for example, is in danger of being hopelessly narrowed and dwarfed, unless he turns elsewhere for qualities quite un-Wordsworthian, and the same is still truer of the students of Milton and Shelley. Of Shakspeare alone (but perhaps, to a certain extent, of Burns) would it be safe to say 'Communication with *his* soul is ample in itself; his thought must freshen, can never cramp, is ever many-sided and full of the free air of the world.' This then, is supremely significant, that Shakspeare, unlike the Greek dramatists, unlike the Biblical poets, unlike all English singers save Chaucer only, had no special teaching whatever. He was too universal for special teaching. He touched all the chords of human life; and life, so far from containing any human lesson, is only a special teaching for each individual,—a sibylline riddle, by which each man may educate himself after his own fashion.

We should be madly exaggerating if we were to aver that Mr. Browning is likely to take rank with the supreme genius of the world; only a gallery of pictures

like the Shakspearean group could enable him to do that; and, moreover, his very position as an educated modern must necessarily limit his field of workmanship. What we wish to convey is, that Mr. Browning exhibits, —to a great extent in all his writings, but particularly in this work—a wealth of intellect and a perfection of spiritual insight which we have been accustomed to find in the pages of Shakspeare, and in those pages only. His fantastic intellectual feats, his verbosity, his power of quaint versification, are quite other matters. The one great and patent fact is, that, with a faculty in our own time at least unparalleled, he manages to create beings of thoroughly human fibre; he is just without judgment, without pre-occupation, to every being so created; and he succeeds, without a single didactic note, in stirring the soul of the spectator with the concentrated emotion and spiritual exaltation which heighten the soul's stature in the finest moments of life itself.

## *A YOUNG ENGLISH POSITIVIST.*

THE world is wrong on most subjects, and Mr. John Morley,[1] with the encyclopædic pretensions of his school, is going to set it as right as may be; but it is chiefly wrong in the department of Sociology, and to that, in the meantime, Mr. Morley endeavours to confine his attention. In a series of finely wrought and thoroughly stimulating essays—which we have heard called 'hard' in style, possibly just because they exhibit no love of mere rhetorical ornament, and are, indeed, only rhetorical here and there because they become the necessary vehicle of intense and passionate denunciation—the last disciple of Auguste Comte takes occasion to classify the failures of the old theology and its advocates, to estimate anew the intellectual and moral significance of the great Revolutions, to demolish the intuitionalism of Carlyle, to apotheosise Byron from the point of view of revolt, to examine and criticise the Platonic and Aristotelian ideas of Sociology, and to strengthen many delicate lines of reflection awakened by the greater or less

[1] *Critical Miscellanies.* By John Morley. London: Chapman and Hall.

progress of morals. In all this work, undertaken as a veritable labour of love, he exhibits diligence, patience, and temperance towards opponents, coupled with a literary finesse almost bordering on self-consciousness, and broken only here and there by outbursts of honest hatred against social organisation as at present understood. With theology, of course, he has no patience, though he can be generous (as in the case of De Maistre) to theologians. He is scarcely less tolerant to metaphysics, having, so far at least as we can perceive, little faculty for metaphysical distinctions, and actually seeming to imagine that such men as De Maistre represent the highest forms of metaphysical inquiry. Like every leading thinker of the school to which he belongs, like Mr. Mill, like Mr. Buckle, he is very painstaking, very veritable, very honest, very explicit; like every one of that school, he astonishes us by his fertility of illustration and general power of classifying arguments; and like the very best of them, starting with the great Positivist distinction between absolute and relative truth, he ends by leaving the impression on the reader's mind that the relativity of the truth under examination has been forgotten in the mere triumph of verification.

But Mr. Morley must not be blamed because, like most really powerful writers, he is a bigot—like many Positivists, over-positive — like all very earnest men, armed only against one kind of intellectual attack. With any thinker of his own school he is certainly able to hold his own; for, having the choice of weapons, he chooses the rapier and affects the straight assertive

thrust at the heart of his opponent; but his rapier would be nowhere before the flail of a Scotch Calvinistic parson, and would be equally unavailing against the swift sweep of Mr. Martineau's logic. In all this thoughtful volume, where he seldom loses an opportunity of assailing popular forms of Christian belief, he never once condescends to absolute verification of his formula that Christianity is a creed intellectually effete and fundamentally fallacious. No one of the Scottish worthies could handle 'grace' and 'damnation' with a stronger sense of absolute truth than Mr. Morley has of this formula; and thus it happens that the pupil of a philosophy which specially insists on clear intellectual atmosphere and perfectly verifiable results, starts his science of Sociology on the loose assumption that Positivism has successfully demolished the whole framework of theosophy and metaphysics, that 'the doctrine of personal salvation is founded on fundamental selfishness,' and that the whole spiritual investigation has a merely emotional sweep which, while it agitates and stimulates the brain like all other emotional currents, neither explains phenomena nor tends to make thought veracious.

Of course, Mr. Morley altogether rejects as impossible any science of the Absolute, and holds with Comte that the proper study of man is phenomena, and social phenomena properest of all. A scientific reorganisation of society, in which the wisest would reign supreme, the wicked be punished and the vicious exterminated, women get their proper place in the human scheme—a sort of social Academy, composed of Mr. Morley and

the rest of the prophets, and 'constituting a real Providence in all departments'[1]—this, and this alone, is perhaps what is wanted. So Mr. Morley, after a comprehensive survey of what other systems have done for humanity, decides, or seems to decide, on a system which he has not definitely explained, but which we take to be the Comtist method, shorn of many of those later eccentricities [such as the great social and political scheme], which are very generally understood to verge upon hypothesis.

Much injustice is done to authors by criticising their works as if they were actually something else than they really profess to be; and it would be very unfair to condemn a volume avowedly 'critical' because it is in no sense of the word creative,[2] and while applying to exist-

[1] 'In the name of the past and the future, the servants of humanity, both its philosophical and practical servants, came forward to claim as their due, the general direction of this world. Their object is to constitute at length, a real Providence in all departments—moral, intellectual, and material; consequently they exclude once and for all from political supremacy all "the different" servants of God—Catholic, Protestant, or Deist—as being at once behindhand and a cause of disturbance!'—See Comte's 'Preface to the Catechism.' We have always held that Comte wanted to be *a Pope*.

[2] Some years ago, the present writer, on publishing a slight volume of Essays, *avowedly* crude concentrated 'ideas,' not worked out into any formal shape creative or critical, expressly printed in black and white at the beginning of the book these words: 'The following Essays are prose additions and notes to my publications in verse, rather than mere attempts at general criticism, for which, indeed I have little aptitude.' This was quite enough for the journalist instinct, which, like the pig in the picture, can only be driven in one direction by being urged in the other; and by every journal that condescended to review them, these Essays were discussed *as Criticism*, criticism pure and simple, nothing less and nothing more. Such is the cheering reward given in England to any man who condescends to be explicit.

ing systems the Positive criterion, offers nothing definite and formal in its place. The true position of Comte himself is not among the Critics, but the Creators; for although much criticism was incidental to his scheme, and it was necessary first to demolish old faiths before substituting a new method, by far the finest part of Comte's work was constructive and imaginative—in the highest sense of that last much-misused word. As a historical critic and a practical politician, the place of the author of the Catechism is not high. As an imaginative philosopher, elucidating four points of principle, applying them to five sciences, and illustrating them by innumerable points of wonderful detail, he surely stood in the very front rank of philosophic creators, and has left behind him a mass of magnificent speculation only to be forgotten when the world forgets Aristotle and Bacon. In the department where his master, perhaps, conceived most startlingly—that of Social Physics —Mr. Morley applies the Positive criterion with no ordinary success. If it is distinctly understood, then, that Mr. Morley in the present volume is avowedly and always a critic, never willingly a theorist, and if it be conceded, as all must concede, that he criticises with singular judgment and strange fairness, readers have no right to find fault because in demolishing their Temples he does not come forward actually prepared with a substitute. Probably enough he would refer all grumblers to the Positive system itself as supplying some sort of compensation for the loss of Christian and metaphysical ethics. But that is neither here nor there.

If truth is what we seek, truth absolute, and verifiable any moment by human experience, we must begin by throwing all ideas of compensation aside. Doubtless it is a comfortable thing to believe in salvation and the eternal life, a blissful thing to muse on and cling to the notion of a beneficent and omnipresent Deity working everywhere for good ; and it is therefore no uncommon circumstance for the theologic mind, when threatened, to retort with a savage 'Very good'; but if you prove your case and demolish my belief, what have you to give me in exchange?'—surely a form of retort only worthy in dealing with the heathen and the savage.

Yet it is here precisely that Comtism fails as a political construction ; for Comte himself, as much as the most orthodox of divines, places perpetual stress on the human *necessity* for a faith, though what he at last supplied in the place of God is universally felt to be the very washiest of sentiments, only worthy of the metaphysical school he hated most thoroughly. The dynamic ball rolled along all very well up to this generation. If Protestantism overthrew the Pope and the Saints, it left Heaven and Hell open to all the world and the Georges. If Calvin triumphantly demonstrated 'predestination,' he substituted 'grace' as a comforting possibility. Unitarianism lets God be, beneficent, all-wise, all-giving. The higher Pantheism admits at the very least that the period of mortal dissolution is only the moment of transition—in many cases from a lower state to a higher. In exchange for any of these creeds, what has that religion to give which tells man that he must cease to

believe himself the last of the angels, and be contented to recognise himself as the first of the animals? Expressly declaring, as Mr. Morley declares after Comte,[1] that the longing for individual salvation is basely selfish (this, by the way, is a fallacy of the most superficial kind), the new faith offers us absorption and identification[2] with the 'mighty and eternal Being, Humanity,' a secondary or subjective existence in the heart and intellect of others, unconscious of course, but for that very reason the more blissful and supreme.

Without pausing to smile at the metaphysical difficulty at once obtruded by the apostle of identification,[3] it may well be asked how a creed is to thrive which offers such a very slender inducement to the neophyte. It doubtless sounds very grand at once and for ever to dispense with these inducements and to appeal to the grandest ideal of human unselfishness, but nevertheless the *bonus* has been the secret of all religious successes from the beginning, and the system which leaves that out will never hold the world very long together. That, however, is not the question. The test of a creed is not 'Will it prosper?' but, 'Is it true?' It would be far beyond the limits of an article to apply that test here, even if we felt competent to apply it at all. The present question is a less

[1] Thus *Comte*: 'The old objective immortality, which could never clear itself of the egotistic or selfish character.' And *Morley*: 'The fundamental egotism of the doctrine of personal salvation.'

[2] What is Christian beatification but 'absorption' and 'identification' of this very sort?

[3] The condition of goodness or badness is *consciousness*. There can be no moral *existence* without *identification*.

difficult one. Does Mr. Morley, while applying the Positive criterion in certain cases to other faiths, conclusively establish his hypothesis that these faiths are effete or false? They have prospered, they have been comfortable; but—'are they true?' They are true only historically, is the reply of Mr. Morley; they are now inert and dead; and because nothing better has yet been got to take their place, the world, socially speaking, is in a very bad way. A new system must be inaugurated at once. Mr. Morley will perhaps tell us by-and-by what that system is to be. Meantime he is content to hint that the first step toward improvement will be the resolution to suppress mere vagrant emotions, and to use the intelligence with more scientific precision in the act of examining even the most sacred beliefs of every-day existence.

Mr. Morley almost inclines us to believe that the nearest approach to his ideal type of manhood is Vauvenargues, a short essay on whom he places, as a sort of vignette, at the beginning of his volume. His brief treatment of the French moralist seems to us nothing less than masterly, both as thoughtful criticism and literary workmanship; and the impression left upon the mind is quite as vivid as that of the best biography we ever read. Not a word is wasted, but Vauvenargues' perfect sweetness of heart and strange sanity of intelligence are presented to us in a series of commanding touches. The essay is, in fact, an apotheosis—fit pendant to Comte's own verdict when he placed Vauvenargues in the Positivist Calendar: 'for his direct effort, in spite of the

desuetude into which it had fallen, to reorganise the culture of the heart according to a better knowledge of human nature, of whom this noble thinker discerned the centre to be affective.' It is an open question, indeed, whether both Comte and Mr. Morley, while discerning in Vauvenargues the eighteenth-century prophet of a certain cardinal doctrine—if not the cardinal doctrine—of Positivism, are not led to overrate his literary services to the cause ; for the passages Mr. Morley quotes in indirectly vindicating his subject's right to a place in the Calendar, while certainly capable of the highly prophetic construction he seems to put upon them, again and again point far away into Theism and chime in ill with that creed which regards man as the first of animals.

Vauvenargues would certainly have admitted man's position as the highest of Animals, but he would positively have rejected man's pretensions to be the highest of Beings, capable, without Divine aid, of regulating the tumultuous forces of the world by the co-ordination of the intellect and the heart. His virtual identification of the passions and the will, however, in answer to the theology which makes man the mere theatre of a fight between will and passion, seems to us unanswerable as a scientific proposition, altogether apart from its grandeur as a moral aphorism. This, however, does not destroy the theological statement, but merely clears away a misinterpretation. Whether we distinguish between will and passion, and view one as the mere index of the other, there can be no doubt of the power of the intelligence in regulating, determining, and guiding them—there can be no doubt

that man has the power, within certain conditions, of acting as his will, or passion, impels him. True theology never meant to distinguish will and passion so absolutely as thinkers of Mr. Morley's school seem to imply. What it did mean to convey was, that the power of certain wild original instincts in human nature is limited by the power of intellectual restraint. This restraint over, or co-ordination of, the passions, is what Mr. Morley would call the culture of the passions themselves, so that the entire intellectual proclivity is towards good, and bad passion becomes impossible.

Mr. Morley would be the last man to deny the natural imperfection of men, call it by whatever name he will; or to limit the office of the intelligence in regulating such passions as that, for instance, of desire. This is precisely what theology means. If a man, by culture or will, or restraint of any kind, or educated virtuous instinct, can prevent himself from lusting after his neighbour's wife, or coveting his neighbour's wealth, or envying his neighbour's success, it matters little whether the happy state of mind is effected by perfect tone of the passions themselves, their invariable harmony with the dictates of reason, or their hound-like obedience to the uplifted finger of a Will. In any case, the intelligence is supreme in the matter, and decides *pro* or *contra*, for or against any given line of conduct. The other difference is only a difference of procedure immediately preliminary to action.

Turning from Vauvenargues, Mr. Morley attempts another apotheosis—that of Condorcet; and his treat-

ment, on the whole, perhaps because it is more elaborate, and bears more the form of the ordinary review-essay, is not so perfectly satisfactory. Yet this essay, taken with certain modifications, is a clear gain to the loftier biography, and leaves on the mind of the reader a vivid —and what is better, a vivifying—effect. It may at once be admitted that the apotheosis is successful, and would vindicate Condorcet's place in any Calendar of Saintly Souls, benefactors to the species, if the list is not to be limited to commanding intellects. It will be doubted, however, whether Mr. Morley, in his avidity to detect another prophet of the Gospel according to Comte, does not highly exaggerate the position of Condorcet as a contributor to the literature of reason.

Insane and inane raving against all religious creeds, with a grim reserve in favour of Mohammedanism, possibly on account of its scope in the sensual direction ; the blind exaggeration of the importance of the scientific method, coupled with a lurking love of hypothesis quite akin to that of Comte in his later musings ; a rabid hatred of all opponents ; a virtual damnation of all disbelievers in Propagandism, the very kernel theory of which was the infinite perfectibility of every human being—all this illustrated in a temperament which Mr. Morley, with justice indeed, calls 'non-conducting,' and lying inert in literature destitute of the pulse of life. If the man who represented these things, and who for these and other failings has been justly forgotten by history, is to be picked out for an apotheosis on no stronger showing than the resemblance of his avowed *process* to that of con-

temporary types, then surely the catalogue of Positive saints will be great indeed, and Roman Catholicism will be beaten altogether. Indeed, it may be doubted if the Church in its worst days ever exhibited so extraordinary a tendency to proselytise the living and apotheosise the dead as the present school of Positivists. Adherence to their cardinal principle of scientific procedure is quite enough to make them countenance encyclopædic pretensions in anybody ; and it is with no regret that they perceive the infallible airs of men who, except from the point of view of the true faith, have no claim whatever to the title of first-class intellects.

Condorcet was no more a first-class intellect than is Professor Huxley. Mr. Morley's picture of him is grand and vivifying, and sufficiently proves him to have been a social benefactor, a servant of the race, a thinker touching truth in a false time ; but then the world was and is full of benefactors, of servants, of thinkers most apprehensive in the direction of light. In our opinion, the only circumstance which could have warranted the claim put forward by Condorcet, on the score that his 'central idea was to procure the emancipation of reason, free and ample room for its exercise, and improved competence among men in the use of it,' would have been the verification of Condorcet's own rationality as a historical critic. As for his exalted hopes regarding the future of humanity, which are put forward as another merit, they were the hopes of thousands—part of the great tidal wave which had arisen after long weary years nourished on Pascal's bitter apple of human degeneracy. If Condorcet is to

be calendared for merely sharing the great reaction which he by no means caused, and never guided, how many other contemporaries must be calendared also? Altogether, Mr. Morley's apotheosis of Condorcet must be pronounced less satisfactory than that of Vauvenargues.

Something, too, of Condorcet's own savagery—that worst savagery of all, characteristic of 'reasonable' men—seizes Mr. Morley once or twice during his second essay. Even in the very act of rebuking the Encyclopædist for his intolerance towards religious forms, Mr. Morley ceases to be cool and generous, and condescends to the 'set-teeth' sort of enunciation, observing that Condorcet might have 'depicted religion as a natural infirmity of the human mind in its immature stages, just as there are specific disorders incident in childhood to the human body. Even on this theory, he was bound to handle it with the same calmness which he would have expected to find in a pathological treatise by a physician. Who would write of the sweating sickness with indignation, or describe zymotic diseases with resentment? Condorcet's pertinacious anger against theology is just as irrational as this would be from the scientific point of view which he pretends to have assumed.' Now, it is too bad to talk about the 'scientific point of view' in the same breath with such writing as this. It is sheer rampant dogmatism, not to be excelled by any polemical disputant.

Even on Mr. Morley's own showing, even accepting Comte's classification, which regarded even *Fetichism* as having exercised a distinctly valuable influence on man-

kind, the theological period was a *necessary* step in human progress, and we have yet to learn that a man or a society can finally attain health by undergoing a course of diseases. If religion is fairly comparable to the 'sweating sickness' or to 'zymotic diseases,'[1] how is it that it has served its turn in the historical sense? Mr. Morley might as well have compared it to the cholera or the small-pox at once; and then, if possible, explained to us from what point of view these complaints *help* the sufferer to an ultimate condition of robust manhood. Or does Mr. Morley mean to demolish religion even historically, and aver that, if not a disease itself, it is only possible in a diseased state of society? Even then his description is scientifically inaccurate; unless the process of evolution is simply the casting off of unhealthy matter from a body virtually whole, instead of the healthy development of simple forms of life into complex forms.

Zymotic diseases sometimes kill, and always injure more or less; and the history of thought, as a series of such diseases, would naturally leave us, where the ingenious American Professor Draper found us, at the stage of moral decrepitude, instead of where (we rejoice to say) Mr. Morley finds us, at some stage preliminary to health and robust manhood. Elsewhere in his book Mr. Morley has this unguarded exclamation: 'As if,' he cries, 'the highest moods of every age necessarily clothed themselves in religious forms!' Does the writer mean to assert, again in the face of the historical classification as

[1] Zymotic diseases, it must be remembered, are due to some supposed poison introduced into the system.

laid down by Comte, that they do *not*? or has he merely made the mistake of writing the word 'religious' in place of the word 'theologic'? Really, Mr. Morley seems to have imbibed so much of Condorcet's hatred for priests and for the priesthood, that the very words 'Christian,' 'religious,' 'theologic,' put him quite out of his boasted science. So far as it is positively excited, his destructive criticisms on religions destroy nothing, except a little of the confidence we usually feel in the writer. That confidence never flags long. We could forgive Mr. Morley for being infinitely more unjust to what he hates, when we remember his tender justice to what he honours. Nothing to our thinking is more beautiful in this volume than the recurring anxiety to vindicate the memory of Voltaire. Here is one terse passage on the tender-hearted Iconoclast; it forms part of the paper on Condorcet:—

Voltaire, during his life, enjoyed to the full not only the admiration that belongs to the poet, but something of the veneration that is paid to the thinker, and even something of the glory usually reserved for captains and conquerors of renown. No other man before or since ever hit so exactly the mark of his time on every side, so precisely met the conditions of fame for the moment, nor so thoroughly dazzled and reigned over the foremost men and women who were his contemporaries. Wherever else intellectual fame has approached the fame of Voltaire, it has been posthumous. With him it was immediate and splendid. Into the secret of this extraordinary circumstance we need not here particularly inquire. He was an unsurpassed master of the art of literary expression in a country where that art is more highly prized than anywhere

else ; he was the most brilliant of wits among a people whose relish for wit is a supreme passion ; he won the admiration of the lighter souls by his plays, of the learned by his interest in science, of the men of letters by his never-ceasing flow of essays, criticisms, and articles, not one of which lacks vigour, and freshness, and sparkle ; he was the most active, bitter, and telling foe of what was then the most justly abhorred of all institutions—the Church. Add to these remarkable titles to honour and popularity that he was no mere declaimer against oppression and injustice in the abstract, but the strenuous, persevering, and absolutely indefatigable champion of every victim of oppression or injustice whose case was once brought under his eye (p. 44).

We owe Mr. Morley thanks for his vindication of the eighteenth century as a great Spiritual Revolution—in excess of course, like all such revolutions, but incalculably beneficial to the cause of humanity. The movement which began with the Encyclopædia and culminated in Robespierre, has been only half described by Carlyle's phrase, that it was an universal destructive movement against Shams ;—it was an eminently constructive movement as well, and though it failed historically it did not fail ultimately, for the wave of thought and action to which it gave birth has not yet subsided, and is not likely to subside till the world gets some sort of a glimpse of a true social polity. A leading cause of the public misconception as regards the eighteenth century has been Mr. Carlyle. It is chiefly for this reason, we fancy, that Mr. Morley devotes to Carlyle one of the longest, and in some respects the very best, paper in the series.

We think, indeed, that his anxiety to find here another Prophet, however cloaked and veiled, of the new gospel, leads him to be far too lenient to Carlyle's shortcomings—we had almost said his crimes. From the first hour of his career to the last, Carlyle has been perniciously preaching the Scotch identity—a type of moral force familiar to every Scotchman, a type which is separatist without being spiritual, and spacious without being benevolent—to a generation sadly in need of quite another sort of preacher. With a Phrase perpetually in his mouth, which might just as well have been the Verbosities as the Eternities or the Verities, with a mind so self-conscious as to grant apotheosis to other minds only on the score of their affinity with itself, and with a heart so obtuse as never, in the long course of sixty years, to have felt one single pang for the distresses of man as a family and social being, with every vice of the typical Scotch character exaggerated into monstrosity by diligent culture and literary success, Mr. Carlyle can claim regard from this generation only on one score, that of his services as a duct to convey into our national life the best fruits of Teutonic genius and wisdom. His criticisms are as vicious and false as they are headstrong. Had he been writing for a cultured people, who knew anything at all of the subjects under discussion, they would never have been listened to for a moment.

He has, for example, mercilessly brutalised Burns in a pitiable attempt to apotheosise him from the separatist point of view; and he has popularised pictures of Richter and Novalis which fail to represent the subtle

psychological truths these men lived to illustrate. His estimates of Goethe verge upon insanity; his abuse of Grillparzer is an outrage on literary justice. For Voltaire as the master of *persiflage* he has perfect perception and savage condemnation, but of Voltaire as the Apostle of Humanity he has no knowledge whatever, simply because he has no heart whatever for Humanity itself. He has written his own calendar of heroes, and has set therein the names of the Monsters of the earth, from Fritz downwards, — always, be it remembered, aggrandising these men on the monstrous side, and generally wronging them as successfully by this process as if his method were wilfully destructive. Blind to the past, deaf to the present, dead to the future, he has cried aloud to a perverse generation till his very name has become the synonym for moral heartlessness and political obtusity. He has glorified the gallows and he has garlanded the rack. Heedless of the poor, unconscious of the suffering, diabolic to the erring, he has taught to functionaries the righteousness of a legal thirst for revenge,[1] and has suggested to the fashioners of a new criminal code the eligibility of the old German system of destroying criminals by torture. He has *never* been on the side of the truth. He was for the lie in Jamaica, the lie in the South, the lie in Alsace and Lorraine. He could neither as a moralist see the sin of slavery, nor predict as a prophet the triumph of the abolitionists. He has been all heat and no light, a

[1] Compare Mr. Fitzjames Stephen and other writers who confound *legal punishment* with *moral retaliation.*

portentous and amazing futility. If he has done any good to any soul on the earth it has been by hardening that soul, and it is doubtful if Englishmen wanted any more hardening—by separating that soul's destiny from that of the race, as if the English character were not almost fatally separated already. He is not only, as Mr. Morley expresses it, 'ostentatiously illogical and defiantly inconsistent;' — he pushes bad logic to the verge of conscious untruth, and in his inconsistency is wilfully criminal. He begins 'with introspections and Eternities, and ends with blood and iron.' He has impulses of generosity, but no abiding tenderness. He has a certain reverence of individual worth, especially if it be strong and assertive, but he has no pity for aggregate suffering, as if pain became any less when multiplied by twenty thousand! He is, in a word, the living illustration of the doom pronounced on him who, holding to God the mirror of a powerful nature, blasphemously bids all men be guided by the reflection dimly shadowed therein.

Why should this man, alike a sort of Counsel for the Prosecution, represent Providence? God *versus* Man, Mr. Carlyle prosecuting, and, alas! not one living Soul competent or willing to say a word for the defence! It is 'you *ought* to do this,' and 'you *must*, by the Verities!' So the savage Pessimist inveighs; but the world gets weary in time of the eternal 'ought,' and turns round on the teacher with a quiet 'very good; but *why?*'[1] If

[1] A Scotchman of much the same type of mind, though of course infinitely weaker in degree, once reminded me, in answer to such charges, that

Positivism only teaches the world to distrust men who come forward to try the great cause of humanity by the wretched test of the individual consciousness, and who, because they can control their own heart-beats, fancy they have discovered the secret of the universe, it will have done enough to secure from posterity fervent and lasting gratitude.

But Positivism—or at least its last exponent—has something to learn in its own department of Sociology. On one vital question—to the present writer the most vital of all questions—Mr. Morley writes as follows :—

There are two sets of relations which have still to be regulated in some degree by the primitive and pathological principle of repression and main force. The first of these concern that unfortunate body of criminal and vicious persons whose *unsocial propensities* are constantly straining and endangering the bonds of the social union. They exist in the midst of the most highly civilised communities, with all the predatory or violent habits of barbarous tribes. They are the active and unconquered remnant of the natural state, and *it is as unscientific as the experience of some unwise philanthropy has shown it to be ineffective, to deal with them exactly as if they occupied the same moral and social level as the best of their generation.* We are amply justified in employing towards them, wherever their offences endanger order, the same methods of coercion which originally

they were made by people who were blind to the prophet's 'exquisite' sense of *humour.*' Of course humour is at the heart of it—but humour is character, and nothing so indicates a man's quality as what he considers laughable. Carlylean humour, often exquisite in quality, may be found in a book called 'Life Studies,' by J. K. Hunter, recently published at Glasgow. Note especially the chapter called 'Combe on the Constitution of Woman.' Mr. Hunter is a parochial Carlyle, with some of the genius and none of the culture.

made society possible. *No tenable theory about free will or necessity, no theory of praise and blame that will bear positive tests, lay us under any obligation to spare either the comfort or the life of a man who indulges in certain anti-social kinds of conduct.* Mr. Carlyle has done much to wear this just and austere view into the minds of his generation, and in so far he has performed an excellent service (p. 225).

Here Mr. Morley is at one with the 'hard school' of political economists; but what is defensible from their point of view becomes unpardonable from his. Is the 'hard and austere' view of crime, then, the scientific view? Is it scientific to deal with the criminal as if he stood (by nature) on a lower moral level than the rest of mankind? and is it *effective?* To all these questions we venture to interpose an emphatic negative. If there is any truth which this generation does not recognise, it is the divine law of human relationship: the fact—which we should fancy it the glory of Positivism to disseminate—that crime and sin are abnormal and accidental conditions, to an enormous extent remediable, and never—even in the most awful instances—quite eclipsing the divine possibilities of the spiritual nature.

To treat criminals as mere nomads, to pursue them as Tristran l'Hermite pursued the 'Egyptians,' to offer them no alternative but instant conformity or the gibbet, is merely to give us another version of Mr. Carlyle's eternal 'Ought.' There are points of view, indeed—strictly scientific points of view—from which the existence of these very classes in the heart of the community may be regarded as a distinct social blessing; and it is

doubtful if, with all their errors and with all their sins, they contaminate society to any fatal degree. But whatever may be the nature of their influence, it is certain that no good has ever come from dealing with them on the principle of extermination. More has been wrought among them by reverence than by hate or oppression — by approaching them, we mean, in a reverent spirit, conscious of the sacredness of life, however deeply in revolt against organisation. It is one of the dangers of Positivism that it may lead its disciples to set too light a value on mere life, as distinguished from life intellectual; and we therefore find many leading Positivists writing as if the life intellectual, being the life spiritual, was necessarily the only life sacred.

We do not, however, accuse Mr. Morley of being unconditionally in favour of the gallows. Further on, indeed, he protests against the kind of thinking which 'stops short' at the gibbet and the soldier as against a very bad form of hopelessness. He would probably agree with us that Punishment and War are entirely defensible up to the point where they are confounded with righteous vengeance and human retribution. If they are necessary, no more is to be said; the defence is perfect when their necessity is shown. But vengeance and retribution are terms unworthy of science, and so is the point of view which views the criminal classes as mere nomads[1]—a superficial classification not more

[1] In point of fact, the most hopeless forms of crime in this country occur strictly within the body of society as a *consequence* of its present organisation. Conformity to the social law, not revolt outside its circle, created the crimes of Tawell and numberless others. Was Madeline Smith a nomad?

characteristic of the Positivist love for symmetrical arrangement than the haunting determination to regard every fact and event as links in a long chain of evolution, or the constant willingness to admit hypotheses in any number so long as they develope naturally from the great cardinal hypothesis, never yet verified, that the basis of life is physiological.

Elsewhere, with delicious ingenuity, Mr. Morley takes many articles of Mr. Carlyle's creed, *inverts* them, and shows their value as dim foreshadowings of the religion of common sense. He certainly does Carlylism fair justice; and we wish him joy of the contributions he finds in it to the new gospel—such as that portion of it which insists on the primitive treatment of criminals, and points logically (let us add) to a similar treatment towards all who are guilty of moral or intellectual revolt of any sort.

These Essays are so pregnant with references to the great subjects which now interest men of culture, that we might prolong again and again the reflections awakened by them at every page. Our purpose, however, is rather to call attention to their intellectual interest than to discuss them in detail; for, indeed, each question involved could only be treated adequately at great length. The essays on 'Joseph de Maistre' and on 'Byron' are quite as good in their way as the rest. The great Ultramontanist is chiefly interesting to Mr. Morley—and to us—because his scheme for the reorganisation of European society was the skeleton of Comte's own social scheme. After a brilliant survey of De

Maistre's life and works, Mr. Morley utters his own 'epode' on Catholicism :—

De Maistre has been surpassed by no thinker that we know of as a defender of the old order. If anybody could rationalise the idea of supernatural intervention in human affairs, the idea of a Papal supremacy, the idea of a spiritual unity, De Maistre's acuteness and intellectual vigour, and, above all, his keen sense of the urgent social need of such a thing being done, would assuredly have enabled him to do it. In 1817, when he wrote the work in which this task is attempted, the hopelessness of such an achievement was less obvious than it is now. The Bourbons had been restored. The Revolution lay in a deep slumber that many persons excusably took for the quiescence of extinction. Legitimacy and the spiritual system that was its ally in the face of the Revolution, though mostly its rival or foe when they were left alone together seemed to be restored to the fulness of their power. Fifty years have elapsed since then, and each year has seen a progressive decay in the principles which then were triumphant. It was not, therefore, without reason that De Maistre warned people against believing 'que la colonne est replacée, parcequ'elle est relevée.' The solution which he so elaborately recommended to Europe has shown itself desperate and impossible. Catholicism may long remain a vital creed to millions of men, a deep source of spiritual consolation and refreshment, and a bright lamp in perplexities of conduct and morals ; but resting on dogmas which cannot by any amount of compromise be incorporated with the daily increasing mass of knowledge, assuming, as the condition of its existence, forms of the theological hypothesis which all the preponderating influences of contemporary thought concur directly or indirectly in discrediting, upheld by an organisation which its history for the last five centuries has exposed to the distrust and hatred of men as the sworn enemy of mental freedom and growth, the pretensions of Catholicism to renovate society are among the most pitiable and impotent

that ever devout, high-minded, and benevolent persons deluded themselves into maintaining or accepting. Over the modern invader it is as powerless as paganism was over the invaders of old. The barbarians of industrialism, grasping chiefs and mutinous men, give no ear to priest or pontiff, who speak only dead words, who confront modern issues with blind eyes, and who stretch out but a palsied hand to help. 'Christianity,' according to a well-known saying, has been tried and failed; the religion of Christ remains to be tried. One would prefer to qualify the first clause, by admitting how much Christianity has done for Europe even with its old organisation, and to restrict the charge of failure within the limits of the modern time. To-day its failure is too patent. Whether, in changed forms and with new supplements, the teaching of its founder is destined to be the chief inspirer of that social and human sentiment which seems to be the only spiritual bond capable of uniting men together again in a common and effective faith, is a question which it is unnecessary to discuss here. 'They talk about the *first centuries of Christianity*,' said De Maistre; 'I would not be sure that they are over yet.' Perhaps not; only if the first centuries are not yet over, it is certain that the Christianity of the future will have to be so different from the Christianity of the past, as almost to demand or deserve another name (pp. 189–191).

This is, however, strongly felt, and put as strongly. Mr. Morley is hardly prepared for a scientific judgment on Protestantism. He approaches it too much in the spirit of the doctor of lunacy, who believes all the world to be mad but himself. One turns with relief to the article on Byron, perhaps the best that was ever written on the subject, but unfortunately flawed, because the writer, who has just recommended a severe handling of the criminal classes, seems unconscious that he is deal-

ing with a great criminal's life and character. Scientific criticism, so sharp to the anti-social Outcasts, might be less merciful to the Outcast whose hand was lifted against every man's life and reputation, and who was *consciously* unjust, tyrannous, selfish, false, and anti-social. We do not agree with Mr. Morley that the public has nothing to do with Byron's private life. The man invited confidence for the sake of blasting the fair fame of others; and the lie of his teaching is only to be counteracted by the living lie of his identity. If revolters and criminals are to be gibbeted, then we claim in the name of Justice the highest gibbet for Byron. The following passage is too important not to be quoted entire:—

More attention is now paid to the mysteries of Byron's life than to the merits of his work, and criticism and morality are equally injured by the confusion between the worth of the verse he wrote and the virtue or wickedness of the life he lived. The admirers of his poetry appear sensible of some obligation to be the champions of his conduct, while those who have diligently gathered together the details of an accurate knowledge of the unseemliness of his conduct, cannot bear to think that from this bramble men have been able to gather figs. The result of the confusion has been that grave men and women have applied themselves to investigate and judge Byron's private life, as if the exact manner of it, the more or less of his outrages upon decorum, the degree of the deadness of his sense of moral responsibility, were matter of minute and profound interest to all ages. As if all this had anything to do with criticism proper. It is right that we should know the life and manners of one whom we choose for a friend, or of one who asks us to entrust him with the control of public interests. In either of these two cases we need a guarantee for present and future. Art knows

nothing of guarantees. The work is before us, its own warranty. What is it to us whether Turner had coarse orgies with the trulls of Wapping? We can judge his art without knowing or thinking of the artist. And in the same way, what are the stories of Byron's libertinism to us? They may have biographical interest, but of critical interest hardly the least. If the name of the author of 'Manfred,' 'Cain,' 'Childe Harold,' were already lost, as it may be in remote times, the work abides, and its mark on European opinion (p. 254).

Coming from a man of Mr. Morley's calibre, these words are at the very least remarkable. They are worthy of the critic of the Second Empire, M. Taine, in his most anti-didactic mood. Byron is, according to Mr. Morley, the poet of the Revolution, the English expression of vast social revolt all over Europe. In cases of such revolt, involving ethical distinctions, is it not of the very highest consequence, from a scientific point of view, to examine the *personal reasons* of the revolter? An enquiry into Byron's life verifies the hypothesis awakened at every page of his works, that this man was in arms, *not* against society, but against his own vile passions; that he was a worldly man full of the affectation of unworldliness, and a selfish man only capable of the lowest sort of sacrifice—that for an egoistic idea; and that at least half of what he wrote was written with supreme and triumphant insincerity.

Mr. Morley is very wroth at the piggish virtues fostered by the Georges, and with reason; but he sometimes forgets that Byron did not rebel so much against these as against the domestic instinct itself. His fight being throughout with his own conscience, it is of supreme

importance to learn what he had done and what he had been. Pure practical art, like that of Turner, offers no analogy in this case; it would not even do so in the case of Shelley; for even Shelley has hopelessly interwoven his literature with his own life and the life of men. The confusion in Mr. Morley's mind is M. Taine's confusion, and gives birth to half the meretricious and silly literature of the day. Byron was a poet, an intellectual and emotional force, finding expression in written words. He was not distinctly a singer, nor a musician, nor a painter, nor a philosopher, nor a politician; but he was something of all these, as every great poet must be. Music and art do not arbitrarily imply ethics, but ethics is included in literature, and is within the distinct scope of the poetic intellect.[1] Byron was not merely an artist—in point of fact, he was very little an artist; and he never did write a line, or paint a picture, which tells its own tale apart from himself. He rose in revolt to try the question of himself against society, and his life is therefore the property of society's cross-examiners. The question remaining is—can they show that he had no fair cause for revolt at all?

With almost every word of what Mr. Morley says about Byron's poetry we cordially agree. The glorious animal swing of much of the verse, the faultless self-characterisation, the shaping and conceiving power, the wit and humour abundant on every page, are amply and cordially appreciated. Byron's variety of mind was

[1] Observe, says the æsthetic critic, that the end of all art is to give pleasure. Yes; and so is the ultimate end of all virtue.

miraculous. As an inventive poet, he was immeasurably the master and superior of Shelley, however wondrous we may consider Shelley's spiritual quality. It seems to us, moreover, that Shelley's spirituality is deeply mixed with intellectual impurities, fatally tinged with the morbid hues of a hysteric and somewhat peevish mind. It is the fashion now to call him 'divine,' nor do we for a moment dispute the apotheosis; but we doubt exceedingly if 'The Cenci' (for example) could bear the truly critical test and retain its limpid and divine transparency, or if the choice of so essentially shallow and false a myth as that of Prometheus, coupled with numberless similar predilections, was not the sign of a third-class intellect.

One way of noting the radical difference between Byron and Shelley is very simple. Let the reader carefully peruse, first, 'Prometheus,' and then look at the reflection in his own mind twenty-four hours afterwards. Let him next read, say even 'Manfred'—bad though that is as a piece of writing—and go through the same process. He will find that he experienced, during the actual perusal of the first poem, a sense of exquisite fascination at every line; that, twenty-four hours afterwards the impression was dim and doubtful; and that, sooner or later, it is expedient to go again through the process of perusal. In the other instance the result will be inverse. The reader's feeling during perusal will be one almost of impatience; but twenty-four hours afterwards the impression will be very vivid, not as to particular passages, but as to the drama as a

whole. In point of fact, there is more real creative force and shaping power, infinitely less of the aroma and essence of beauty, in 'Manfred' even, than in the 'Prometheus.' Pursuing this analogy further, let the reader who has carefully studied and enjoyed both Byron and Shelley look at the reflections in his own mind at the present moment. A wild and beautiful rainbow-coloured mist, peopled by indefinite shapes innumerable, and by two or three shapes definite only as they are morbid and terrible: such, perhaps, is the reflection of the poetry of Shelley.

A clear mountain atmosphere, with a breezy sense of the sea, a succession of romantic faces singularly human and vivid in spite of their strange resemblance to each other, a ripple of healthy female laughter, a life, a light, an animal sense of exhilaration—surely all these things, and many other things as human, take possession of us at once when we think of the poetry of Byron. Shelley possessed supremely and separately a small portion of those qualities which Byron possessed collectively. Shelley had some gifts in excess, and he lacked all the others. It may be suggested, in answer to this, that one supreme gift is better than all the gifts in dilution. Undoubtedly. But Byron, at his very best, exhibits all the gifts supremely, and even in the direction of spirituality penetrates very high indeed in his noblest flights.

He wrote too often for scribbling's sake; but when he wrote from true impulse he often produced the highest sort of poetry—perfect vision in perfect language. Let it be remembered also, to his glory, that he shared with

the greatest creators of the world—with Shakspeare, with Boccaccio, with Cervantes, with Chaucer, with Goethe, with Walter Scott—something of that rare faculty of *humour* which is as necessary a qualification for testing most forms of life as certain acids are necessary for testing metals, and without which a first-class intellect generally yields over-much to the other rare and besetting faculty of *introspection* to produce literature of the highest rank. All human truth is misapprehended till it is conceived as relative, and there is nothing like humour for betraying, as by magic, Truth's relativity.

We should have liked to say something of the last two papers in Mr. Morley's volume, that 'On some Greek Conceptions of Social Growth,' and that 'On the Development of Morals;' but the subjects are too tempting and spacious; it is enough to say that their treatment, although very slight, is as satisfactory as possible from Mr. Morley's point of view. That point of view, we may remark in concluding, fluctuates a little in these pages; and we find the writer contradicting himself on the nature of justice, on the right of punishment, and on the greater or less perfectibility of the race. Altogether, however, these Essays are as much distinguished by logical consistency as by wealth of study and literary skill. Mr. Morley is one more illustration of the old saying, that the soldiers of Truth fight under many different banners. His conviction that speculation in the theological direction is a sheer waste of time and a sign of weak intellect would be more startling if he himself, with a secret consciousness of

being far adrift, showed less anxiety to cast anchor somewhere. This anchoring, the Positivists call getting hold of a 'method.'

That there are many men in the world who do not think it proves better seamanship to get into harbour and lie there through all weathers than to venture out boldly and to explore the great waters, is a fact which Mr. Morley does not seem to understand at its value.

To him, the wild speculative instinct—the fierce human thirst to face the mysterious darkness, and battle through all the wild winds of the unknown deep—is merely lunatic and miserable; more than that, it is despicable and selfish. Examined at its true worth, this feeling of his is merely a consequence of intellectual temperament. All these attempts to criticise Systems from the outside are abortive. The Positivists talk nonsense about Metaphysics; the metaphysicians talk nonsense about Positivism—almost invariably, for example, confusing it with Comtism. But, forgetting all such questions for the moment, let us congratulate ourselves that a man like Mr. Morley is seriously working at the great problem of Sociology in a constructive as well as a critical spirit. He fights for the Truth, and his motto is of no more consequence than mottos generally. Hating shams, loving truth and beauty, reverencing almost to idolatry the great and deathless figures of literature and history, compassionating the sorrows of mankind and hating the laws which complicate them, looking forward to a mundane future closely approaching perfection, and feeling that it is only to be

reached by virtuous living and high thinking, he is to be welcomed as another adherent to the blessed cause of Humanity—which was that of Plato as well as John the Baptist, and was paramount in the troubled heart of Mahomet as well as in the divine soul of Christ. He serves God best who loves truth most; and we, at least, do not conceive how Truth, which is the very essence and quality of many things and many men, can be arbitrarily confined to any one set of those mental phenomena which we call Religion.

## *HUGO IN* 1872.

MANY a long year has now elapsed since the advent of the Romantic School filled the aged Goethe with horror, causing him to predict for modern Art a chaotic career and a miserable termination; and gray now are the beards of the students who flocked in cloaks and slouch hats to applaud the first performance of 'Hernani' at the national theatre. Since those merry days a new generation has arisen, and more than one mighty landmark has been swept away. Goethe is dead; so are dozens of minor Kings—not to speak of Louis Philippe.

The sin of December has been committed and expiated; the man of Sedan has been arraigned before the bar of the world, and received as sentence the contempt and execration of all humanity; and meantime, the exile of Guernsey, after a period of fretful probation, has gone back to the bosom of his beloved France. Political changes have been fast and furious. Not less fast and furious have been the literary revolutions. The poor bewildered spectator, be his proclivities political or literary, has been hurried along so rapidly that he has scarcely had time to get breath. There lies France, a mighty Ruin. Beyond rises Deutschthumm, a portentous

Shadow, at which the veteran of Weimar would have shivered. Here comes Victor Hugo, with his new poem.[1] And Chaos, such as Goethe predicted, is every way fulfilled!

How great we hold Victor Hugo to be in reference to his own time we need not say; veritably, perhaps, there is no nobler name on the whole roll of contemporary creators; but we surely express a very natural and a very common sentiment when we say that every fresh approach of this prodigy is bewildering to the intellect. We have had so frequently during the last generation the spectacle of reckless trading in high departments—in politics more particularly; we have beheld so constantly the collapse of governmental windbags and social balloons of the Hausmann sort; we have stood by helpless so often while the mad Masters of the world played their wild and fantastic tricks before high heaven, and moved sardonically from one bloody baptism to another; we have seen so much evil come of empty words and vain professions, and moral bunkum generally—that we may be pardoned, perhaps, for regarding with a certain alarm that sort of *literature* which, with all its wonderful genius, may fairly be described as reckless also—reckless and blind to all artistic consequences.

'Worts! worts! worts!' said Sir Hugh Evans; and here, in all the latest efflorescence of what was once the Romantic, and may now fairly be called the Chaotic, School, we have Words innumerable—brilliant and

[1] 'L'Année Terrible.'

musical, doubtless, but wild and aimless; every sentence with a cracker in its tail, till we get utterly indifferent to crackers; image piled on image, epithet on epithet, phrase choking phrase; here a catherine-wheel of ecstasy, there a rocket of fierce appeal; a blaze of colour everywhere, all the hues of the prism (except the perfect product of all, which is pure white light); the whole forming a dazzling, hissing, spluttering Firework of human speech. 'How very fine!' we exclaim; 'there's a rocket for you! look at these raining silver lights! Ah, this is something like an exhibition!' But after it is all over, and the sceptical ones point out to us the wretched darkened canvas framework where the last sparks are lingering and the last smuts falling, we are angry at our own enthusiasm, and feel like men who have been befooled. After all, we reflect, the place is only Cremorne; the object merely the amusement of a crowd of gaping pleasure-seekers who pay so much a head. It has been a vulgar entertainment at the best; and we try to forget it, looking up, as the smoke clears, at the silent stars. This mood, however, is still more unfair than the other. Truly enough, we have been present at fireworks, but on a scale of tremendous genius. A great master has been condescending for our amusement, and has actually worked wonders with his materials.

Nor is this all. When a poet like Victor Hugo, yielding to the daimonic influence of his own spirit, produces for us in public all the wild resources of his fearless art, he cannot fail to awaken in us forces which

slumber at the touch of any other living man. We may resent the emotion as a weakness, but the emotion exists: we are lifted by it as on the wings of the wind, and driven 'darkly fearfully afar.' The scenery of the spectacle may be tawdry, but it is outlined with a mighty hand; the lights may be only wretched rush-lights, but what a strange lurid gleam they shed over the rude and gigantic towers and battlements of the scene! It is magnificent, although it is not nature; it is full of infinite suggestion, though it is not art. The power is unbounded; the only question that remains being, Is the power squandered? Much, doubtless, is squandered; and it is this persistent waste which, corresponding as it does to French waste generally, fills one with suspicion and alarm. Reckless writing has its delights, like reckless trading, like reckless fighting and swaggering; but will it not lead to the same end as these others? Concentrated and reserved for specific efforts, instead of being frivolously spent in every direction, the same genius who limned Jean Valjean and Fantine might yet rise to his due place and glory as the Æschylus of his generation.

After all, it is doubtful if Æschylus, doomed to live in these latter days, would have kept his head. Even as it was, he 'let go' tremendously, and was far, very far, from being a steady-brained bard; his vision repeatedly overmastering him, and his utterance becoming thick and confused with portentous weight of matter. His lot was easy, however, compared with that of the modern who has aspired to perform Æschylean functions in the

nineteenth century, by chronicling in tremendous poetic cipher the ravings and sufferings of *our* Titan; and it is, therefore, an open question whether Victor Hugo is not a greater than even Æschylus, in so far as he has grappled with, and to some extent triumphed over, difficulties to all intents and purposes insuperable.

We, for our part, find more to move our homage in Jean Valjean than in the Prometheus. We hold that one figure, rudely as it is drawn, to be in some respects the very noblest conception of this generation; and we would look on at fireworks for ever, if once or twice such a face as Jean's shone out with its heaven-like promise. Gilliatt, too, is noble in the Promethean direction;—and so is Quasimodo. Indeed, we know not where to look, out of Æschylus, for figures conceived on the same scale, so typical, so colossal; looming upon us from a stage of mighty amplitude, with a grand Greek background of mountain and sky. They have the Greek freedom and the Greek limitations. Jean Valjean, just as surely as Prometheus, wears the mask, and is elevated on the cothurnus; whence at once his extraordinary stature and his one fixed expression of changeless and monotonous pain.

Would one choose rather the mobile human face and the free motion of men on a small stage, he must enter the Globe Theatre and hear the wonderful acting of the English players; but with Victor Hugo, as with the father of Athenian drama, we are limited to one mood and wearied by one high-pitched chant. Even if this were perfectly done, it would grow wearisome; but

being far from perfectly done, being at once wearisome and chaotic, it depresses as often as it elevates, and makes us long for a breezier music and a fresher, kindlier movement of face and limb. Nor can Victor Hugo's greatest admirers deny the fact that he deliberately overclouds his conceptions with verbiage, and blurs what was originally a noble outline by subsequent attempts at elaboration. Our first glimpse of his figures moves us most; our further examination of them is fraught with pain; and not till we have closed our eyes to contemplate the impression left upon the mind, do we again feel how greatly the figures were originally conceived. This writer triumphs invariably by sheer force of primary pictorial vision; triumphs generally in defiance of his own incapacity to *paint* exquisitely. Reckless (as we have expressed it) of all literary consequences, he produces works which are at once miracles of imagination and marvels of bad taste. Directly we have got the outline of his picture, all further study of it is unsatisfactory: we must fill in the tints for ourselves. Compare the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus with 'Les Misérables' of Victor Hugo, and perceive the difference between power concentrated and power recklessly drivelled away. The whole episode of Jean Valjean could have been compressed into a tragedy, and, given in such quintessence, would have been an unmixed pleasure to all time. As it is, we doubt whether posterity will do justice to a production so shapeless, so interminable; and this is the more irritating, as it con-

tains in dilution more colossal imagery than anything we have had in Europe since the 'Divine Comedy.'

Viewed simply for what he is, Hugo is very great; but viewed for what he might have been, he is persistently disappointing. With every fresh year of his life he has grown two-fold—in power of conception and power of windiness; until we now recognise in him a god of the elements indeed, but one with more affinity to Boreas than to Apollo. It was doubtless in an unlucky moment that he first freed himself from rhythmic fetters. His was just the sort of genius that needed to be bound and drilled. Let loose on the mighty fields of prose, he knows no limit to his wanderings, and he follows his jerky fancies from one sentence to another, like a snipe-shooter floundering, popping, and perspiring in an Irish marsh. He will go epigram-hunting through a whole series of chapters, at the most critical point of his narrative. A single word (take 'Waterloo' in a certain part of 'Les Misérables') is Will-o'-the-wisp enough to keep him rushing through the dark till the reader faints for very weariness. If Goethe was, as Novalis described him to be, the Evangelist of Economy, Victor Hugo is assuredly the Evangelist of Waste. A prodigy of less supreme energy would have collapsed long ago under such tremendous exertions; but he, just when we expect to see him sink altogether, springs from the solid earth with fresh vigour. Genius, he has told us in 'William Shakspeare,' is not circumscribed. Exaggeration, moreover, is the glory of genius. 'Cela, c'est l'Inconnu! Cela, c'est l'Infini! Si Corneille

avait cela, il serait l'égal d'Eschyle. Si Milton avait cela, il serait l'égal d'Homère. Si Molière avait cela, il serait l'égal de Shakspeare.'

We have here, in a nutshell, the Apotheosis of literary Waste; but it would not be difficult to show that none of Hugo's typical sublimities—Homer, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Juvenal, Percival, St. John, St. Paul, Tacitus, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakspeare—exhausted their energies in the fashion peculiar to the author of 'L'Homme qui Rit.' The truth is, Hugo attempts to elevate into a system the recklessness which, in his own case, is sheer matter of temperament. His mind is for ever pitched in too high a tone of excitement: febrile symptoms, with him, characterise the normal intellectual condition. He is always high-strung, with or without provocation, evincing that excited French power of superficial passion, whether his themes be the wrongs of poor humanity or the loss of a hat-box at a railway station. A cynical foreigner would accuse him of attitudinising. He spouts and strides. Not content with being recognised as Æschylus, he at times affects the graces of La Fontaine. His humour, nevertheless, is very grim. Nor is his satire much better. His true mood is Ercles' mood—your true nineteenth century heroic.

And now, surely, if ever, might such a poet find truly heroic matter made to his hand; now might he compose for us the latter Iliad and the greater; choosing for his theme a stranger siege than that of Troy, and a national sentiment nobler and more stirring than ever moved the

heart of Agamemnon or any Greek. If great events can manufacture great song, surely such song shall rise soon, whether as a pæan or a dirge; but, meantime, the one man who was capable of expressing in colossal cipher the supreme issues of this Franco-Teutonic struggle, and of aggrandising, through sheer chaotic imagination, figures which are yet too near to us for realistic poetic treatment, has contented himself with keeping a sort of diary in verse of the principal events of the great war, beginning at the Plébiscite, and ending (for the time being, at least) with Henri Cinq's refusal to abandon the White Flag. Of course, such a Diary, even if kept by a much smaller man, could not fail to be interesting. Kept by Hugo, it necessarily lacks the true piquancy of the best Diaries, that of *brevity;* but it abounds in fine little touches of self-revelation; and if, on the whole, it fails to fill us with a due sense of the magnitude of the events it describes, that also was inevitable, because it again and again occupies the ground already covered by the public journals.

Politically speaking, we believe it to be written, every line, on the side of the Truth; nor do we know how to conceal our admiration and wonder at the unerring fidelity with which the writer, amid all his self-consciousness and attitudinising, reaches straight at the throat of every public fallacy which bars his path. Let this praise, now as ever, be conceded to Victor Hugo: his imagination never leads him into the region of Lies. He strikes on the side of Humanity. His vision is far-reaching, puissant, perhaps solitary, just now in France.

He sees with those who prophesy human regeneration. One of the most earnest poems in his book has for its theme the barbaric *stupidity* of War. All are instinct with the truest Republican sentiment and the strongest natural piety. The last chronicles the doom of the Old World, and after that, the Deluge! Thank heaven, however, Hugo does not recognise the Noah of the period in M. Thiers.

The Diary opens with a prologue, entitled, 'Les 7,500,000 Oui,' which first saw the light in the *Rappel*:—

> Quant à flatter la foule, ô mon esprit, non pas!
> Ah! le peuple est en haut, mais la foule est en bas.

This is the key-note of the poem, and it is a vehement protest against the fallacy that the blind and confused element of *number* in itself constitutes the People. No; the people works, not in dark, crude masses, but through tremendous *individuals*, who do right in its name. Gracchus, Leonidas, Schwitz, Winkelried, Washington, Bolivar, Manin, Garibaldi;—these are the People; and they have nothing in common with that vile, blind, confused Mob—sombre weakness and sombre force—which ever and anon, outraging the 'august conscience' of the world, orders Man to receive some wretched Master—the creature of blind and multitudinous 'choice.' 'O multitude!' exclaims the poet, 'we will resist thee.'—

> Nous ne voulons, nous autres,
> Ayant Danton pour père et Hampden pour aïeul,
> Pas plus du tyran Tous que du despote Un Seul.

The People is married to the Idea: the Populace leagues itself to the Guillotine. The People constitutes itself into the Republic; the Populace accepts Tiberius. Then comes the following burst of strong eloquence, forensic rather than poetic, as indeed may be said, with certain reservations, of the whole poem :—

> Le droit est au-dessus de Tous ; nul vent contraire
> Ne le renverse ; et Tous ne peuvent rien distraire
> Ni rien aliéner de l'avenir commun.
> Le peuple souverain de lui-même, et chacun
> Son propre roi ; c'est là le droit. Rien ne l'entame.
> Quoi ! l'homme que voilà qui passe, aurait mon âme !
> Honte ! il pourrait demain, par un vote hébété,
> Prendre, prostituer, vendre ma liberté !
> Jamais. La foule un jour peut couvrir le principe ;
> Mais le flot redescend, l'écume se dissipe,
> La vague en s'en allant laisse le droit à nu.
> Qui donc s'est figuré que le premier venu
> Avait droit sur mon droit ! qu'il fallait que je prisse
> Sa bassesse pour joug, pour règle son caprice !
> Que j'entrasse au cachot s'il entre au cabanon !
> Que je fusse forcé de me faire chaînon
> Parce qu'il plaît à tous de se changer en chaîne !
> Que le pli du roseau devînt la loi du chêne !

In the same strain of mingled mockery and defiance, the prologue continues; but the peroration rises into a far higher mood of truly characteristic imagery :—

> Oh ! qu'est-ce donc qui tombe autour de nous dans l'ombre ?
> Que de flocons de neige ! En savez-vous le nombre ?
> Comptez les millions et puis les millions !
> Nuit noire ! on voit rentrer au gîte les lions ;

On dirait que la vie éternelle recule ;
La neige fait, niveau hideux du crépuscule,
On ne sait quel sinistre abaissement des monts ;
Nous nous sentons mourir si nous nous endormons ;
Cela couvre les champs, cela couvre les villes ;
Cela blanchit l'égout masquant ses bouches viles ;
La lugubre avalanche emplit le ciel terni ;
Sombre épaisseur de glace ! Est-ce que c'est fini ?
On ne distingue plus son chemin ; tout est piége.
Soit.
Que restera-t-il de toute cette neige,
Voile froid de la terre au suaire pareil,
Demain, une heure après le lever du soleil ?

Whatever may be said of the poetic merit of this passage, it will be admitted that it could only have been written by Victor Hugo.

After this, the diary begins in earnest. 'August, 1870,' and of course—'Sedan.' Forthwith is conjured up before our vision the wretched Napoleonic phantom, who is gloomily and fatuously soliloquising. 'I reign ; yes ! But I am despised ; and I must be feared. I mean in my turn to become master of the world. I have *not yet* taken Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna, Naples, Dantzic, Munich, Dresden ; that is all to come. I will subdue that perfidious old Albion. I will be great. I will have Pope, Sultan, and Czar for my valets. I can demolish Prussia.' And so on, in the well-known strain of 'Napoléon le Petit.' After further determining to set all Europe by the ears, and to be puissant Arbiter of the quarrel, he arranges to begin proceedings at once, under cover of 'the night.' But he has been reckoning without

his host. 'It was broad day! Day at London, at Rome, at Vienna; and all people had their eyes open, except this man. He believed that it was night, because he was *blind!* All saw the light, and he alone saw the shade.'

Tous voyaient la lumière et seul il voyait l'ombre.

Hélas! sans calculer le temps, le lieu, le nombre,
A tâtons, se fiant au vide, sans appui,
Ayant pour sûreté ses ténèbres à lui,
Ce suicide prit nos fiers soldats, l'armée
De France devant qui marchait la renommée,
Et sans canons, sans pain, sans chefs, sans généraux,
Il conduisit au fond du gouffre les héros.
Tranquille, il les mena lui-même dans le piége.

—Où vas-tu? dit la tombe. Il répondit: Que sais-je?

The terrible result is pictured with quaint power. 'Two vast forests made of the heads, arms, feet, voices of men, and of swords and terror, march upon each other and mingle. Horror!' In the midst of a carnage too dreadful for pen to picture, amid the roar of cannon and the shriek of the dying, when all things bled, fought, struggled, and died, one voice, one 'monstrous cry,' was heard: 'LET ME LIVE!' (Je veux vivre!) 'The stupified cannon was silent, the drunken *mêlée* paused;' and *then,* to the amaze and horror of united Europe—

Alors la Gaule, alors la France, alors la gloire,
Alors Brennus, l'audace, et Clovis, la victoire,
Alors le vieux titan celtique aux cheveux longs,
Alors le groupe altier des batailles, Châlons,

Tolbiac la farouche, Arezzo la cruelle,
Bovines, Marignan, Beaugé, Mons-en-Puelle,
Tours, Ravenne, Agnadel sur son haut palefroi,
Fornoue, Ivry, Coutras, Cérisolles, Rocroy,
Denain et Fontenoy, toutes ces immortelles
Mêlant l'éclair du front au flamboiement des ailes,
Jemmape, Hohenlinden, Lodi, Wagram, Eylau,
Les hommes du dernier carré de Waterloo,
Et tous ces chefs de guerre, Héristal, Charlemagne,
Charles-Martel, Turenne, effroi de l'Allemagne,
Condé, Villars, fameux par un si fier succès,
Cet Achille, Kléber, ce Scipion, Desaix,
Napoléon, plus grand que César et Pompée,
*Par la main d'un bandit rendirent leur épée.*

This finishes the record for August; and leaves the reader plenty to reflect over, in all conscience!

If we detach this characteristic writing from its political associations, and set aside for a moment our natural sympathy with the sentiments its wild imagery expresses, we shall possibly conclude that it is neither very trenchant nor very admirable. As a literary effort, it is not much beyond Vermesch; and as political philosophy, it is of about Rochefort's calibre. Now that the first fever of excitement is over, let us admit that, after all, the man of Sedan was a Scape-goat as well as 'a Bandit.' For our own part, we believe the man to have been what France made him, less disposed to military glory than to social pleasure, and quite content to slumber on his laurels if the world would have permitted him. He had created his Monster just as Frankenstein did before him; and the gigantic creature—the portentous and shadowy *Oui*

of the Plébiscite—drove him on and up in his very soul's despite. His ambitious days were over. He ever hated the sword-flash. He had never recovered the shock of Mexico. His best friends had died away and left him. Feebly, clumsily, protestingly, he drifted the way his Monster drove him—through the Baptism of Fire to the feet of the Teuton bigot at Sedan ; and then, even then, in spite of his utter collapse and shame, he did not 'want to die.'

This dislike to die a Roman death has been hurled at him with most inconsequent scorn by others besides Victor Hugo ; but why on earth should they have expected anything so heroic, when on their own showing the old gentleman was so contemptible a speculator ? *He* die ? *he* play the hero ? Wherefore ? And again, on what showing would self-immolation have been noble ? We do not particularly admire the gambler who, after having lost his all, blows out his brains or hangs himself to a tree. We merely call him a fool for his pains ; a fool, not a hero. It is therefore highly illogical to taunt the man of Sedan with having completely realised our own conception of his character. He calmly accepted his loss, and saved his skin : a very contemptible course, but still very natural, since the man was never anything but a gambler. It is, moreover, useless now for France to gird and gibe afresh at the Scapegoat. He lives ; and that is all.[1] Success or failure cannot alter such a nature ; and the man of December was the man of Sedan. For all that, France failed when he failed,

[1] Since the above was written, he has passed away.

bringing to a crisis that insatiable avarice of power which has been her curse since Buonaparte syruped and drugged the Revolution. No sane man denies that the war, had it culminated with Sedan, would have been an unmixed blessing to the human race.

'September;' and the plot thickens. First comes a poem entitled 'Choice between the Two Nations,' in which there is a long complimentary address to Germany, followed by three pregnant words addressed to France—'O ma mère!' After that we have some smart satire addressed to 'Prince Prince et Demi,' ending with the memorable avowal that the war between the ex-Emperor of France and the King of Prussia was simply a misunderstanding between two robbers—Cartouche and Schinderhannes! This is merely the prelude to still stronger abuse of the Teuton leader—'madly served by all those whom he oppresses, the Ogre of Right Divine, devout, correct, moral, born to become Emperor, and to remain Corporal.'

> Ici c'est le Bohême et là c'est le Sicambre.
> Le coupe-gorge lutte avec le deux-décembre. . . .
> Oui, Bonaparte est vil, mais Guillaume est atroce,
> Et rien n'est imbécile, hélas, comme le gant
> Que ce filou naïf jette à ce noir brigand.

The *dénouement* comes very speedily. 'O France, a puff of wind scatters in one moment that shade of Cæsar and that shade of a Host.' Ere September is over, the iron rings are closing around Paris. On the last day of the eventful month, Hugo addresses a lively poem to his

little grandchild. 'You were a year old yesterday, my darling! O Jeanne, and your sweet prattle mingles with the sound of the mighty Paris under its armour.' The verses are in the poet's best and simplest style—far superior to his ordinary invective.

As the month of the chill wind and the yellow leaf breaks upon us, we find the poet yielding to its solemnising influence, and glancing sadly back over his past years of exile. The mood swiftly changes; for Hugo is in Paris, and he can see the glittering legions at the gates. 'They are there, threatening Paris. They punish it. *Why?* For being France, and for being the Universe! . . . . They punish France for being Liberty. They punish Paris for being that city where Danton thunders, where Molière shines, where Voltaire laughs. They punish Paris for being the Soul of the World.' On the face of it, this reads like nonsense; but, beneath the surface, it is superbly true, as any man may convince himself who dispassionately reviews the history of Europe, from the Coalition downwards. However, the Seven Chiefs are 'not to blame.' They are 'black forces fighting against right, light, and love,' by the sheer laws of their diabolic natures. Seven princes—the cipher of evil—Wurtemburg, Nassau, Saxony, Baden, Mecklenburg, Bavaria, Prussia; in other words, 'Hate, Winter, War, Mourning, Pestilence, Famine, Ennui.'

Paris devant son mur a sept chefs comme Thèbe!

'Unheard-of spectacle! Erebus besieging the Star.'

Mists rise, darkness gathers; it is 'November.' Victor

Hugo addresses the coming night from the battlements; and, lifting his eyes to the horizon, sees the sunset like the blood-red blade of a sword. He thinks of some great duel 'of a monster against a god,' and seems to behold 'the terrible sword of heaven, red and fallen to earth, after a battle.' In the next piece, he eagerly defends Paris against the scandals spoken concerning her at Berlin; and, turning from the praise of his beloved city, he addresses the Teuton princes in a number of verses which are meant to be sarcastic, but are really without point or sting. Here, however, we get a coarse, but magnificent image.

> Soit, princes. Vautrez-vous sur la France conquise.
> De l'Alsace aux abois, de la Lorraine en sang,
> De Metz qu'on vous vendit, de Strasbourg frémissant
> Dont vous n'éteindrez pas la tragique auréole,
> *Vous aurez ce qu'on a des femmes qu'on viole,*
> *La nudité, le lit, et la haine à jamais.*
>
> Oui, le corps souillé, froid, sinistre désormais,
> Quand on les prend de force en des étreintes viles,
> C'est tout ce qu'on obtient des vierges et des villes.

In small things, as in great, waste is fatal; and the above passage is spoiled by the last three lines, thrust in on account of the irresistible alliteration of 'vierges' and 'villes.' Following in due sequence, we have a number of short pieces of no great importance, except perhaps the spirited address to a certain Bishop who called the poet an 'Atheist.' Some tender lines 'to a child ill during the siege' conclude the diary for November.

'December' opens wildly, with a bleak wind of protestation against the dismemberment of France. Then come some lines on Grant's message; bitter lines enough, and, God knows, bitter with reason; after that, an address to a certain cannon named after the poet, and a description of the forts, 'the enormous watch-dogs of Paris;' and then some sad words 'to France,' in which *we* come in for our turn of blame.

> *Personne pour toi.* Tous sont d'accord. Celui-ci,
> Nommé Gladstone, dit à tes bourreaux : merci !
> Cet autre, nommé Grant, te conspue, et cet autre,
> Nommé Bancroft, t'outrage ; ici c'est un apôtre,
> Là c'est un soldat, là c'est un juge, un tribun,
> Un prêtre, l'un du Nord, l'autre du Sud ; pas un
> Que ton sang, à grands flots versé, ne satisfasse ;
> Pas un qui sur ta croix ne te crache à la face.
> Hélas ! qu'as-tu donc *fait aux nations ?*

The outrage was completed, and there was 'no one for her.' Dogberry looked on as usual, with his arms folded—self-constituted policeman of the world, but more like one of those rheumatic old watchmen who walked about all night announcing the weather, but fled into their boxes at the slightest whisper of danger. 'No one for her?' Yes, the Dead!

> O morts pour mon pays, je suis votre envieux !

It is the end of the year, and France lies bleeding at the feet of the robber. Germany has triumphed indeed; but whose will be the *final* victory, asks the poet, as the year dies out? Low as France lies, her spirit already

penetrates afar, and strikes at the very heart of the constitutional fallacies which form the present strength of the German Confederation. The Earthquake began in Paris; hushed for a space, it will reappear again at Berlin. The whole of the final address to Germany must be read and studied, to realise its grand revolutionary flavour. It is one of the finest things in the book; perhaps the one poem which reads like an inspiration. We detach the concluding lines from the context, for the sake of their wonderful music and sublime prophecy:

> Non, vous ne prendrez pas la Lorraine et l'Alsace,
> Et je vous le redis, Allemands, quoi qu'on fasse,
> *C'est vous qui serez pris par la France.* Comment?
> Comme le fer est pris dans l'ombre par l'aimant;
> Comme la vaste nuit est prise par l'aurore;
> Comme avec ses rochers, où dort l'écho sonore,
> Ses cavernes, ses trous de bêtes, ses halliers,
> Et son horreur sacrée et ses loups familiers,
> Et toute sa feuillée informe qui chancelle,
> Le bois lugubre est pris par la claire étincelle.
> Quand nos éclairs auront traversé vos massifs;
> Quand vous aurez subi, puis savouré, pensifs,
> Cet air de France où l'âme est d'autant plus à l'aise
> Qu'elle y sent vaguement flotter la Marseillaise;
> Quand vous aurez assez donné vos biens, vos droits,
> Votre honneur, vos enfants, à dévorer aux rois;
> Quand vous verrez César envahir vos provinces;
> Quand vous aurez pesé de deux façons vos princes,
> Quand vous vous serez dit: ces maîtres des humains
> Sont lourds à notre épaule et légers dans nos mains;
> Quand, tout ceci passé, vous verrez les entailles
> Qu'auront faites sur nous et sur vous les batailles;

Quand ces charbons ardents dont en France les plis
Des drapeaux, des linceuls, des âmes, sont remplis,
Auront ensemencé vos profondeurs funèbres,
Quand ils auront creusé lentement vos ténèbres,
Quand ils auront en vous couvé le temps voulu,
*Un jour, soudain, devant l'affreux sceptre absolu,*
*Devant les rois, devant les antiques Sodomes,*
*Devant le mal, devant le joug, vous, forêt d'hommes,*
*Vous aurez la colère, énorme qui prend feu;*
*Vous vous ouvrirez, gouffre, à l'ouragan de Dieu;*
Gloire au Nord ! ce sera l'aurore boréale
Des peuples, éclairant une Europe idéale !
Vous crierez:—Quoi! des rois ! quoi donc ! un empereur!—
Quel éblouissement, l'Allemagne en fureur !
Va, peuple ! O vision ! combustion sinistre
De tout le noir passé, prêtre, autel, roi, ministre,
Dans un brasier de foi, de vie et de raison,
Faisant une lueur immense à l'horizon !
Frères, vous nous rendrez notre flamme agrandie.
*Nous sommes le flambeau, vous serez l'incendie.*

After that, January 1871 may open a little more gaily. In a charming letter sent by balloon-post, we get a picture of the internal life of Paris during the siege. 'I have given 15 francs for four fresh eggs, not for myself, but for my little George and my little Jeanne. We eat horse, rat, bear, and donkey flesh;' and so on in a very graphic description. A little further on, we find a poem entitled 'The Pigeon,' in which the city is compared, not very felicitously, to a dark lake, and the bird to a black speck in heaven. 'The Atom comes in the shade to succour the Colossus.' Rather more felicitous is the 'Sortie.' 'And the women with calm faces and

broken hearts hand them their guns, first *kissing* them.' After this, we get nothing very striking, until (passing over certain savage addresses to the Germans in reference to the capitulation) we come to the end of the month of February, at which point of the diary we find a striking poem on 'Progress.' It is very long, but very powerful; eloquent rather than poetic. The canto which follows, under the head of 'March,' may be passed over without comment, as it is chiefly devoted to personal misfortune. In 'March' the poet lost his beloved son Charles, who died very suddenly. The misfortune is chronicled in some affecting, but rather theatrical, verses.

From this point the diary may be said to fuse itself into one long passionate political chant. April, May, and June 1871;—who does not recollect the terrors and the agonies of those months? As they advance, the poet's fury increases. 'Paris incendié' is a terrific piece of fiery declamation. 'The two Trophies' fiercely pleads for the Vendôme Column and the Arc de Triomphe. All the world knows in which direction flows the sympathies of Victor Hugo; all the world knows also how the poet was driven out of Brussels, because, as a high-souled patriot, he dared to utter the bitter and unpalatable *truth.* There are many poems expressive of personal feeling at this part of the diary—many strong and incisive words of protest and recrimination—but, to our mind, the simplest and best is, 'A Qui la Faute?' It speaks for itself, in its terrible, subdued irony, and we transcribe it entire:—

## À QUI LA FAUTE?

Tu viens d'incendier la Bibliothèque?
—Oui.
J'ai mis le feu là.
—Mais c'est un crime inouï!
Crime commis par toi contre toi-même, infâme!
Mais tu viens de tuer le rayon de ton âme!
C'est ton propre flambeau que tu viens de souffler!
Ce que ta rage impie et folle ose brûler,
C'est ton bien, ton trésor, ta dot, ton héritage!
Le livre, hostile au maître, est à ton avantage.
Le livre a toujours pris fait et cause pour toi.
Une bibliothèque est un acte de foi
Des générations ténébreuses encore
Qui rendent dans la nuit témoignage à l'aurore.
Quoi! dans ce vénérable amas des vérités,
Dans ses chefs-d'œuvre pleins de foudre et de clartés,
Dans ce tombeau des temps devenu répertoire,
Dans les siècles, dans l'homme antique, dans l'histoire,
Dans le passé, leçon qu'épelle l'avenir,
Dans ce qui commença pour ne jamais finir,
Dans les poëtes! quoi, dans ce gouffre des bibles,
Dans le divin monceau des Eschyles terribles,
Des Homères, des Jobs, debout sur l'horizon,
Dans Molière, Voltaire et Kant, dans la raison,
Tu jettes, misérable, une torche enflammée!
De tout l'esprit humain tu fais de la fumée!
As-tu donc oublié que ton libérateur,
C'est le livre? le livre est là sur la hauteur;
Il luit; parce qu'il brille et qu'il les illumine,
Il détruit l'échafaud, la guerre, la famine;
Il parle; plus d'esclave et plus de paria.
Ouvre un livre. Platon, Milton, Beccaria.
Lis ces prophètes, Dante, ou Shakspeare, ou Corneille;
L'âme immense qu'ils ont en eux, en toi s'éveille;

Ébloui, tu te sens le même homme qu'eux tous ;
Tu deviens en lisant grave, pensif et doux ;
Tu sens dans ton esprit tous ces grands hommes croître ;
Ils t'enseignent ainsi que l'aube éclaire un cloître ;
A mesure qu'il plonge en ton cœur plus avant,
Leur chaud rayon t'apaise et te fait plus vivant ;
Ton âme interrogée est prête à leur répondre ;
Tu te reconnais bon, puis meilleur ; tu sens fondre
Comme la neige au feu, ton orgueil, tes fureurs,
Le mal, les préjugés, les rois, les empereurs !
Car la science en l'homme arrive la première.
Puis vient la liberté. Toute cette lumière,
C'est à toi, comprends donc, et c'est toi qui l'éteins !
Les buts rêvés par toi sont par le livre atteints.
Le livre en ta pensée entre, il défait en elle
Les liens que l'erreur à la vérité mêle,
Car toute conscience est un nœud gordien.
Il est ton médecin, ton guide, ton gardien.
Ta haine, il la guérit ; ta démence, il te l'ôte.
Voilà ce que tu perds, hélas, et par ta faute !
Le livre est ta richesse à toi ! c'est le savoir.
Le droit, la vérité, la vertu, le devoir,
Le progrès, la raison dissipant tout délire.
Et tu détruis cela, toi !
—Je ne sais pas lire.

After that, one turns with trembling hands to the epilogue, 'The Old World and the Deluge.'

LE FLOT.

Tu me crois la marée et je suis le déluge.

Verily ; and as yet no Dove appears to betoken the subsidence of the waters !

Here must cease our sketch of this unique poem. We

have left little space for comment. It has all the merits, as well as all the faults, of the writer's style. Poor and unvaried in metaphor (observe, for example, the reiterated use of Night and Morning, Light and Darkness, the Abyss, the Stars, and the Tide); sicklied o'er with pet names, such as Æschylus, Cain, Cyrus, Gengis, Timour; tautological in ideas and theatrical in manner; thin to attenuation in much of its philosophical matter, it is still in no sense disappointing, though in every sense below the high level of the writer at his best. It is first-class political verse, that is all. With all this, its passion, its music, its veracity, its continued heat of personal emotion, keep us ever reminded of the fact that we are in the presence of a man who in nobility of nature has no superior, in gloomy magnificence of imagery no rival, and in sheer spontaneous poetic eloquence certainly no equal.

## *PROSE AND VERSE.*

(A STRAY NOTE.)

THE 'music of the future' is at last slowly approaching its apotheosis; since 'Lohengrin' has signally triumphed in Italy, and the South is opening its ears to the subtle secrets of the Teutonic Muse. The outcome of Wagner's consummate art is a war against mere melody and tintinabulation, such as have for many long years delighted the ears of both gods and groundlings. Is it too bold, then, to anticipate for future 'Poetry' some such similar triumph? Freed from the fetters of pedantry on the one hand, and escaping the contagion of mere jingle on the other, may not Poetry yet arise to an intellectual dignity parallel to the dignity of the highest music and philosophy? It may seem at a first glance over-sanguine to hope so much, at the very period when countless Peter Pipers of Verse have overrun literature so thoroughly, robbing poetry of all its cunning, and 'picking their pecks of pepper' to the delight of a literary Music Hall; but, in good truth, when disease has come to a crisis so enormous, we have good reason to hope for amendment.

A surfeit of breakdowns and nigger-melodies, or of

Offenbach and Hervé, or of 'Lays' and 'Rondels,' is certain to lead to a reaction all in good time. A vulgar taste, of course, will always cling to vulgarity, preferring in all honesty the melody of Gounod to the symphony of Beethoven, and the tricksy, shallow verse of a piece like Poe's 'Bells' to the subtly interwoven harmony of a poem like Matthew Arnold's 'Strayed Reveller.' True art, however, must triumph in the end. Sooner or later, when the Wagner of poetry arises, he will find the world ready to understand him; and we shall witness some such effect as Coleridge predicted—a crowd, previously familiar with Verse only, vibrating in wonder and delight to the charm of *oratio soluta*, or loosened speech.

Already, in a few words, we have sketched out a subject for some future æsthetic philosopher or philosophic historian. A sketch of the past history of poetry, in England alone, would be sufficiently startling; and surely a most tremendous indictment might be drawn thence against Rhyme. Glance back over the works of British bards, from Chaucer downwards; study the *delitiæ Poetarum Anglicorum*. What delightful scraps of melody! what glorious bursts of song! Here is Chaucer, wearing indeed with perfect grace his metrical dress; for it sits well upon him, and becomes his hoar antiquity, and we would not for the world see him clad in the freedom of prose. Here is Spenser; and Verse becomes *him* well, fitly modulating the faëry tale he has to tell. Here are Gower, Lydgate, Dunbar, Surrey, Gascoigne, Daniel, Drayton, and many others; each full

of dainty devices ; none strong enough to stand without a rhyme-prop on each side of him. Of all sorts of poetry, except the very best, these gentlemen give us samples; and their works are delightful reading. As mere metrists, cunning masters of the trick of verse, Gascoigne and Dunbar are acknowledged masters. Take the following verses from the 'Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins' :

> Then Ire came in with sturt and strife,
> His hand was aye upon his knife,
> He brandeist like a beir ;
> Boasters, braggarts, and bargainers,
> After him passit in pairs,
> All boden in feir of weir . . .
> Next in the dance followed Envy,
> Fill'd full of feid and felony,
> Hid malice and despite.
> For privy hatred that traitor trembled,
> Him follow'd many freik dissembled,
> With fenyit wordis white ;
> And flatterers unto men's faces,
> And back-biters in secret places,
> To lie that had delight,
> With rowmaris of false leasings ;
> Alas that courts of noble kings
> Of them can ne'er be quite !

This, allowing for the lapse of years, still reads like 'Peter Piper' at his best ; easy, alliterative, pleasant, if neither deep nor cunning. For this sort of thing, and for many higher sorts of things, Rhyme was admirably adapted, and is still admirably adapted. When, how-

ever, a larger music and a more loosened speech was wanted, Rhyme went overboard directly.

On the stage even, Rhyme did very well, as long as the matter was in the *Ralph Royster Doyster* vein; but a larger soul begot a larger form, and the blank verse of Gorboduc was an experiment in the direction of loosened speech. How free this speech became, how by turns loose and noble, how subtle and flexible it grew, in the hands of Shakspeare and the Elizabethans, all men know; and rare must have been the delight of listeners whose ears had been satiated so long with mere alliteration and jingle. The language of Shakspeare, indeed, must be accepted as the nearest existing approach to the highest and freest poetical language. Here and there rhymed dialogue was used, when the theme was rhythmic and not too profound; as in the pretty love-scenes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the bantering, punning chat of *Love's Labour's Lost.* True song sparkled up in its place like a fountain. But the level dialogue for the most part was loosened speech. Observe the following speech of Prospero, usually printed in lines each beginning with a capital:—

> This King of Naples, being an enemy to me inveterate, hearkens my brother's suit; which was,—that he, in lieu of the premises, of homage and I know not how much tribute, should presently extirpate me and mine out of the dukedom, and confer fair Milan, with all the honours, on my brother. Whereon, a treacherous army levied, one midnight fated to the purpose did Antonio open the gates of Milan; and, in the dead of darkness, the ministers for the purpose hurried thence *me* and thy crying self!
>
> *Tempest*, act i., scene 2.

Any poet since Shakspeare would doubtless have modulated this speech more *exquisitely*, laying special stress on the five accented syllables of each line. Shakspeare, however, was too true a musician. He knew when to use careless dialogue like the above, and when to break in with subtle modulation ; and he knew, moreover, how the loose prose of the one threw out the music of the other. He knew well how to inflate his lines with the measured oratory of an offended king :

> The hope and expectation of thy time
> Is ruin'd ; and the soul of every man
> Prophetically doth forethink thy fall.
> Had *I* so lavish of my presence been,
> So common-hackney'd in the eyes of men,
> So stale and cheap to vulgar company ;
> Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
> Had still kept loyal to possession ;
> And left me in reputeless banishment,
> A fellow of no mark, nor likelihood.
> By being seldom seen, I could not stir,
> But, like a comet, I was wonder'd at ;
> That men would tell their children, *This is he!*
> Others would say, *Where? which is Bolingbroke?* &c.
>
> *Henry IV.*, Part I., act iii., scene 2.

In the hands of our great Master, indeed, blank verse becomes almost exhaustless in its powers of expression ; but nevertheless, prose is held in reserve, not merely as the fitting colloquial form of the 'humorous' scenes, but as the appropriate loosened utterance of strong emotion. The very highest matter of all, indeed, is sometimes delivered in prose, as its most appropriate medium. Take

the wonderful set of prose dialogues in the second act of 'Hamlet,' and notably that exquisitely musical speech of the Prince, beginning, 'I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth.' Turn, also, to Act V. of the same play, where the 'mad matter' between Hamlet and the Gravediggers, so full of solemn significance and sound, is prose once more. The noble tragedy of 'Lear,' again, owes much of its weird power to the frequent use of broken speech. And is the following any the less powerful or passionate because it goes to its own music, instead of following any prescribed form?—

> I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, act iii., scene 1.

It would be tedious to prolong illustrations from an author with whom everybody is supposed to be familiar. Enough to say that the careful student of Shakspeare will find his most common magic to lie in the frequent use, secret or open, of the *oratio soluta*. And what holds of him, holds in more or less measure of his contemporaries—of Jonson, Marston, Webster, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Greene, Peele, and the rest; just as it holds of the immediate predecessor of Shakspeare, whose 'mighty line' led the way for the full Elizabethan choir

of voices. Then, as now, society had been surfeited with tedious jingle; and only waited for genius to set it free. It is difficult to say in what respect the following scene differs from first-class prose; although we have occasionally an orthodox blank verse line, the bulk of the passage is free and unencumbered; yet its weird imaginative melody could scarcely be surpassed.

*Duch.* Is he mad, too?
*Servant.* Pray question him; I'll leave you.
*Bos.* I am come to make thy tomb.
*Duch.* Ha! my tomb?
Thou speak'st as if I lay upon my death-bed
Gasping for breath. Dost thou perceive me such?
*Bos.* Yes.
*Duch.* Who am I? am not I thy duchess?
*Bos.* That makes thy sleep so broken:
Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright,
But looked to near have neither heat nor light.
*Duch.* Thou art very plain.
*Bos.* My trade is to flatter the dead, not the living;
I am a tomb-maker.
*Duch.* And thou hast come to make my tomb?
*Bos.* Yes!
*Duch.* Let me be a little merry:
Of what stuff wilt thou make it?
*Bos.* Nay, resolve me first: of what fashion?
*Duch.* Why do we grow phantastical on our death-bed?
Do we affect fashion in the grave?
*Bos.* Most ambitiously. Princes' images on the tombs
Do not lie as they were wont, seeming to pray
Up to heaven; but with their hands under their cheeks,
As if they died of the toothache! They are not carved
With their eyes fixed upon the stars; but as

Their minds were wholly bent upon the world,
The self-same way they seem to turn their faces.
*Duch.* Let me know fully, therefore, the effect
Of this thy dismal preparation!—
This talk fit for a charnel.
*Bos.* Now I shall (*a coffin, cords, and a bell*).
Here is a present from your princely brothers;
And may it arrive welcome, for it brings
Last benefit, last sorrow.[1]

He who will carefully examine the works of our great dramatists, will find everywhere an equal freedom; rhythm depending on the emotion of the situation and the quality of the speakers, rather than on any fixed laws of verse.

If we turn, on the other hand, to dramatists and poets of less genius—if we open the works of Waller, Cowley, Marvell, Dryden, and even of Milton, we shall find much exquisite music, but little perhaps of that wondrous cunning familiar to us in Shakspeare and the greatest of his contemporaries. Shallow matter, as in Waller; ingenious learned matter, as in Cowley; dainty matter, as in Andrew Marvell; artificial matter, as in Dryden; and puritan matter, as in Milton, were all admirably fitted for rhymed or some other formal sort of Verse. Rhyme, indeed, may be said, while hampering the strong, to strengthen and fortify the weak. But, of the men we have just named, the only genius approaching the first

[1] 'The Duchess of Malfy,' act iv. sc. 2. The above extract is much condensed. The reader who would fully feel the force of our allusion, cannot do better than study Webster's great tragedy as a whole. It utterly discards all metrical rules, and abounds in wonderful music.

class was Milton ; and so no language can be too great to celebrate the praises of *his* singing.

Passage after passage, however, might be cited from his great work, where, like Molière's 'Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' he talks prose without knowing it ; and, to our thinking, his sublimest feats of pure music are to be found in that drama [1] where he permits himself, in the ancient manner, the free use of loosened cadence. Milton, however, great as he is, is a great formalist, sitting 'stately at the harpsichord.' A genius of equal earnestness, and of almost equal strength—we mean Jeremy Taylor—wrote entirely in prose ; and it has been well observed by a good critic that 'in any one of his prose folios there is more fine fancy and original imagery —more brilliant conceptions and glowing expressions—more new figures and new applications of old figures—more, in short, of the body and soul of poetry, than in all the odes and epics that have since been produced in Europe.' Nor should we have omitted to mention, in glancing at the Elizabethan drama, that the prose of Bacon is as poetical, as lofty, and in a certain sense as musical, as the more formal 'poetry' of the best of his contemporaries.

Very true, exclaims the reader, but what *are* we driving at? Would we condemn verse altogether as a form of speech, and abolish rhyme from literature for ever? Certainly not! We would merely suggest the *dangers* of Verse, and the *limitations* of Rhyme, and briefly show how the highest Poetry of all answers to no fixed scho-

[1] 'Samson Agonistes.'

lastic rules, but embraces, or ought to embrace, all the resources both of Verse generally and of what is usually, for want of a better name, entitled Prose. On this, as on many points, tradition confuses us. The word 'Poet' means something more than a singer of songs or weaver of rhymes. What are we to say to a literary classification which calls 'Absalom and Achitophel' a poem, and denies the title to 'The Pilgrim's Progress;' which includes 'Cato' and the 'Rape of the Lock' under the poetical head, and excludes Sidney's 'Arcadia' and the 'Vicar of Wakefield;' which extends to Cowper, Chatterton, Gray, Keats, and Campbell the laurel it indignantly denies to Swedenborg, Addison (who created Sir Roger de Coverley !), Burke, Dickens, and Carlyle; and which has for so long delayed the placing of Walter Scott's novels in their due niche just below the plays of Shakspeare ?

Instead of being the *spontaneous* speech of inspired men in musical moods, Verse has become a 'form of literature,' binding so-called 'poets' as strictly as bonds of brass and iron; and the effort of most of our strong men has been to free their limbs as much as possible, by working in the most flexible chain of all, that of *blank* verse. If the reader will take the trouble to compare the early verse of Tennyson with his later works, wherein he has found it necessary to shake his soul free of its over-modulated formalism, he will understand what we mean. If, just after a perusal of even 'Guinevere' and 'Lucretius,' he will read Whitman's 'Centenarian's Story' or Coleridge's 'Wanderings of Cain,' his feeling of the

'wonderfulness of prose' will be much strengthened. That feeling may thereupon be deepened to conviction by taking up and reading any modern poet immediately before a perusal of the authorised English version of the 'Book of Job,' 'Ecclesiastes,' or the wonderful 'Psalms of David.'

It is really strange that Wordsworth just hit the truth, in the masterly preface to his 'Lyrical Ballads.' 'It may be safely affirmed,' he says, 'that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. . . . Much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is *this* in truth a strict antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable.' Theoretically in the right, this great poet was often practically in the wrong; using rhythmic speech habitually for non-rhythmic moods, and leaving us no example of glorious loosened speech, combining all the effects of pure diction and of metre. After generations of 'Pope'-ridden poets, the Wordsworthian language was 'loosened' indeed; but it sounds now sufficiently formal and pedantic. His only contemporaries of equal greatness—we mean of course Scott and Byron—were sufficiently encumbered by verse. Scott soon threw off his fetters, and rose to the feet of Shakspeare. Byron never had the courage to abandon them altogether; but

he played fine pranks with them in 'Don Juan,' and, had he lived, would have pitched them over entirely. On the other hand, the fine genius of Shelley and the wan genius of Keats worked with perfect freedom in the form of verse: first, because they neither of them possessed much humour or human unction; second, because their subjects were vague, unsubstantial, and often (as in the 'Cenci') grossly morbid; and third, because they were both of them overshadowed by false models, involving a very retrograde criterion of poetic beauty. Writers of the third or perhaps of the fourth rank, they occupy their places, masters of metric beauty, often deep and subtle, never very light or strong. Once more, what shall we say to a literary classification which grants Shelley the name of 'poet' and denies it to Jean Paul? and which (since poetry is admittedly the highest literary form of all, and worthy of the highest honour) sets a spare falsetto singer like John Keats high over the head of a consummate artist like George Sand?

We have had it retorted, by those who disagreed with Wordsworth's theory, that its *reductio ad absurdum* was to be found in Wordsworth's own 'Excursion;' that 'poem' being full of the most veritable prose that was ever penned by man. Very good. Take a passage:—

> Ah, gentle sir! slight, if you will, the *means*, but spare to slight the *end*, of those who did, by system, rank as the prime object of a wise man's aim—security from shock of accident, release from fear; and cherished peaceful days for their own sakes, as mutual life's chief good and only reasonable felicity. What motive drew, what impulse, I would ask, through a long

course of later ages, drove the hermit to his cell in forest wide ; or what detained him, till his closing eyes took their last farewell of the sun and stars, fast anchored in the desert?— *Excursion*, Book III.

This is not only prose, but indifferent prose ; poor, colloquial, ununctional ; and no amount of modulation could make it poetry. Contrast with it another passage, of great and familiar beauty :—

I have seen a curious child, who dwelt upon a tract of inland ground, applying to his ear the convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell, to which, in silence hushed, his very soul listened intently. His countenance soon brightened with joy ; for from within were heard murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed mysterious union with its native sea. Even such a shell the universe itself is to the ear of Faith. And there are times, I doubt not, when to you it doth impart authentic tidings of invisible things, of ebb and flow, and ever-during power, and central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation.— *Excursion*, Book IV.

Prose again, but how magnificent! poetical imagery worthy of Jeremy Taylor ; but losing nothing by being printed naturally. The conclusion of the whole matter, so far as it affects the 'Excursion,' is that the work, while essentially fine in substance, suffers from an unnatural form. Read as it stands, it is rather prosy poetry. Written properly, it would have been admitted universally as a surpassing poem in prose; although it contains a great deal which, whether printed as prose or verse, would be unanimously accepted as commonplace and unpoetic.

Our store of acknowledged poetry is very precious; but it might be easily doubled, were we suffered to select from our prose writers—from Plato, from Boccaccio, from Pascal, from Rousseau, from Jean Paul, from Novalis, from George Sand, from Charles Dickens, from Nathaniel Hawthorne—the magnificent nuggets of pure poetic ore in which these writers abound. Read Boccaccio's story of Isabella and the Pot of Basil, or Dickens' description of a sea-storm in 'David Copperfield,' or Hawthorne's picture of Phœbe Pyncheon's bedchamber, and confess that, if these things be not poetry, poetry was never written. If you still doubt that the rhythmic form is essential to the highest poetic matter, read that wondrous dream of the World without a Father at the end of Jean Paul's 'Siebenkäs,' and then peruse Heine's description of the fading away of the Hellenic gods before the thorn-crowned coming of Christ. What these prose fragments lose in neatness of form, they gain in mystery and glamour. After reading them, and many another similar effort, one almost feels that rhymed poetry is a poor, petty, and inferior form of language after all.

Just at this present moment we want a great Poet, if we want anything; and we particularly want a great Poet with the courage to 'loosen' the conventional poetic speech. 'Off, off, ye lendings!' Away with lutes and fiddles; shut up Pope, Dryden, Gray, Keats, Shelley, and the other professors of music, and try something free and original—say, even a course of Whitman. Among living men, one poet at least is to

be applauded for having, inspired by Goethe, 'kicked' at the traces of rhyme, and written such poems as, 'The Strayed Reveller,' 'Rugby Chapel,' and 'Heine's Grave.' We select a passage from the first-named of these fine poems :—

THE YOUTH (*loquitur*).

The gods are happy ;
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes,
And see below them,
The earth and men.
They see Teresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm grassy
Asopus' bank,
His robe, drawn over
His old sightless head,
Revolving only
The doom of Thebes.

They see the centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear brown shallow pools
With streaming flanks and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle, thick matted

With large-leaved, low-creeping melon plants
And the dark cucumber.
He reaps and stows them,
Drifting—drifting—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves :
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide step, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon,
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal,
Mares' milk and bread
Baked on the embers ; all around
The boundless waving grass-plains stretch, thick starred
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leaved iris flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal ; before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards
And springing bustard-fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil ; here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds,
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Grey, rain-bleared statues, overspread
The sunny waste.

They see the ferry
On the broad clay-laden
Lone Charasmian stream ; thereupon
With snort and steam,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm-harness'd by the wain ; a chief,

With shout and shaken spear,
Stands at the prow, and guides them ; but astern
The cowering merchants, in long robes,
Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise, earth, and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barr'd onyx stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies.
The gods behold them.

*Matthew Arnold's Poetical Works*, vol. ii.

Equally fine are some of the choric passages in the 'Philoctetes' of the Hon. J. Leicester Warren, one of the first of our young poets. Passages such as we have quoted differ little from prose, and would seem equally beautiful if printed as prose. They move to their own music, and need no adventitious aid of the printer. The same may be said of Goethe's 'Prometheus' :—

Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
Mit Wolkendunst,
Und übe, dem Knaben gleich
Der Disteln köpft,
An Eichen dich an Bergeshöhn ;
Musst mir meine Erde
Doch lassen stehn,
Und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut,
Und meinen Herd,
Um dessen Gluth
Du mich beneidest, &c.

The strain rolls on in simple grandeur, too massive for rhyme or formal verse. It bears to the 'Poe' species of poetry about the same relation that the Venus of Milo does to Gibson's tinted Venus.

Illustrations so crowd upon us as we write, that they threaten to swell this little paper out of all moderate limits. We must conclude; and what shall be our conclusion? This. A truly good Poet is not he who wearies us with eternally jingling numbers; is not Pope, is not Poe, is not even Keats. It is he who is master of all speech, and uses all speech fitly; able, like Shakspeare, to chop the prosiest of prose with Polonius and the Clowns, as well as to sing the sweetest of songs with Ariel and the outlaws 'under the greenwood tree.' It is not Hawthorne, because his exquisite speech never once *rose* to pure song; it is Dickens, because (as could be easily shown, had we space) he was a great master of melody as well as a great workaday humorist. It is not Thackeray, because he never reached that subtle modulation which comes of imaginative creation; and it is not Shelley, because he was essentially a *singer*, and many of the profoundest and delightfullest things absolutely *refuse* to be sung. It is Shakspeare *par excellence*, and it is Goethe *par hasard*. Historically speaking, however, it may be observed that the greatest Poets have not been those men who have used Verse habitually and necessarily; and if we glance over the names of living men of genius, we shall perhaps not count those most poetic who call their productions openly 'poems.'

Meanwhile, we wait on for the Miracle-worker who never comes—*the* Poet. We fail as yet to catch the tones of his voice ; but we have no hesitation in deciding that his first proof of ministry will be dissatisfaction with the limitations of Verse as at present written.

## *BIRDS OF THE HEBRIDES.*

(WRITTEN ON BOARD THE 'ARIEL.')

IT is mid-June, but the air bites sharply, and it is blowing half a gale from the south-west. Squadron by squadron, vast clouds, white as the smoke from a housewife's boiling kettle, sail up from the Atlantic, and pause yonder on Mount Hecla, till they are shredded by a mountain whirlwind into fragments small and white as the breast of the wild swan. The 'Ariel' rolls at her anchorage, with a strain on forty fathoms of chain, and a kedge out to steady her to the wind, which whistles through the rigging like a Cyclops at his anvil. At intervals, down comes the rain, with a roar and a pour; washing the very wind still, till it springs up, renewed by the bath, with stronger and more persistent fury. All round rise the desolate hills, blotted and smeared, with their patches of fuel bog and moorland, and their dark stains of stunted heather. A dreary day! a dreary scene! There is nothing for it in such weather but to sit in one's cabin and smoke, dividing one's attention between gazing occasionally out at the prospect and reading a good book.

Which of one's favourite authors befits such a place and such a season? Björnson might do, if he were less

exclusively Scandinavian; as for Oehlenschläger, he is far too æstheticised by air from Weimar. Catullus and Alfred de Musset, these charming twin brothers of song, would sound insufferable here; and so, for that matter, would Thoreau, full of sea-salt as is that Concord worthy. Whom shall we choose? There they wait to our hand: Goethe, Fichte, Whitman, Swedenborg, Lucretius, Shakspeare, or Victor Hugo? One by one, as the long day passes, the well-thumbed tomes are lifted and dropped; and now, at a critical moment of sheer ennui, we, thrusting our head out into the air, behold a Black Eagle, hovering against the lower shoulder of Hecla, and attended (at a distance) by innumerable Ravens and Hooded Crows, which have gathered from every fissure in the crags to croak their cowardly defiance. A minute he hovers; then, with one proud waft of the wing, he swims from sight into the white and silent mist. As at a given signal, there arises up before us the whole Bird-prospect by which we are surrounded: the two pairing Terns sitting on the stone of 'the point,' as still as stone themselves; the Merganser shooting by, with the white gleam in the patch of his powerful wing; the Black Guillemot fishing tranquilly amid the surf, a stone's throw from the vessel; the Rock Doves wavering swiftly by against the hill-side; the Gulls innumerable hovering afar off at the mouth of the loch, while Puffins and Guillemots make a black patch in the water beneath them; and yonder, inland, the string of wild Geese beating in a wedge windward, to the green island promontories where they love to feed

and rear their young. The picture thus perceived awakens its kindred mood, and (stranger still) produces its kindred book; for has not Mr. Robert Gray, a naturalist well-known in our north, produced this very year the biography of these very birds and all others which frequent the storm-beaten and dreary Hebridean shores?[1] A portly volume it is, and a precious: full of matter of intense interest to the sportsman, the naturalist, and the student of nature; and being to a great extent the record of a long personal experience, it has all the lyric charm of a salient individual flavour. Its niche in the library is sure, for we know no work which supplies its place; and on this dreary day, amid the very scenes where Mr. Gray gathered many of his materials, it may be interesting to compare notes a little with a man so intelligent and so enthusiastic as the author.

> The woods, the streams themselves,
> The sweetly rural, and the savage scene,—
> Haunts of the plumy tribes,—be these my theme!

sang Grahame; and let these be ours: a theme veritably uplifting the spirit as on *wings*, bearing it over wild crag and heath, past the lone ribbed sand, and the rock-bound sound, past the breeding-places of the Gray-lag and the Shell-drake, to the eyrie where the Eagle rears its solitary young.

And first as to the King of Birds itself: the Golden Eagle, or *Aquila Chrysaëtos* of southern naturalists, but

[1] 'The Birds of the West of Scotland, including the Outer Hebrides.' By Robert Gray, late Secretary to the Natural History Society of Glasgow, &c., &c. Glasgow: Murray and Son.

known in these Hebridean Isles by the better and fitter title of Black Eagle, or (in Gaelic) *Iolair dhubh.* Look at him, poised against the lone hill-side, or stretched dead at the keeper's feet, and confess that he is indeed a black fellow, worthy of his Celtic name. Much has been said, and sung, of his nobility of nature:—

> The last I saw
> Was on the wing; stooping, he struck with awe
> Man, bird, and beast; then, with a consort paired,
> From a bold headland, their loved aery's guard,
> Flew high above Atlantic waves, to draw
> Light from the fountain of the setting sun.

That is the poetical point of view: instinct with vital imaginative truth, as any man can aver who has seen Eagles hovering around and above the storm-vexed heads of Skye; but there lingers behind it the ugly prosaic truth, that the bird of Jove, like many other kings, is in reality lacking in true nobility of nature. The Golden Eagle breeds in all these Outer Hebrides, from the Butt of Lewis to Barra Head. There is one eyrie regularly every year yonder among the stony crags of Mount Hecla, and the old birds, instead of molesting the mutton of the surrounding district, fly regularly every day to Skye—twenty-five miles across the Minch—and return with a young lamb each to their eaglets. The following interesting particulars of aquilar habits are from the pen of a good authority, Captain H. J. Elwes, late of the Scots Fusilier Guards:—

> The Golden Eagle usually commences to prepare its nest for eggs about the beginning of April, and selects for that purpose

a rock, which, though nearly always in a commanding situation, is nearer the bottom than the top of a mountain. I have been in or near at least a dozen eyries, and not one of them, to the best of my judgment, is more than 1,000 feet above the sea, though a beautiful and extended view is obtained from all of them. The rock is generally a good deal broken and clothed with grass, ferns, bushes, and tufts of a plant which I believe is *Luzula sylvatica*, and which is always found in the lining of the nest. The ledge on which the nest is placed is generally sheltered from above by the overhanging rock, the structure being sometimes composed of a large quantity of sticks, heather, &c., and in other cases very slight indeed. The eggs are laid about the 10th of April, being a little later in the Outer Hebrides than on the mainland. Their number is usually two, very often three, especially with old birds, and sometimes only one. When there are three, one is generally addled, and not so well coloured as the other two, and they vary extremely both in size and colour.

Golden Eagles generally breed year after year in the same place, though they often have two or three eyries near together, especially when the nests are harried frequently. They sit for about twenty-one days, and are very reluctant to leave the nest when it is first discovered, though afterwards they do not sit so hard. I have seen an eagle sit on its nest for some minutes after a double shot was fired within one hundred yards in full view of the bird; but when once they know that the nest is discovered, they are much wilder. As for the stories about people being attacked by Eagles when taking their nests, I do not believe them, as I have never seen one come within gun-shot of a person at the nest, and I never saw anyone who could vouch for a story of this sort on his own knowledge. In a deer-forest Eagles are of the greatest advantage, and it is a pity that foresters should be allowed to destroy them, as though they occasionally take a red deer calf, yet, in most cases, the forest is all the better for the loss of the weakest ones, and they

confer a great benefit on the deer-stalker by the destruction of the blue hares, which form their favourite food. One of the most interesting sights to a lover of nature is to see an Eagle soon after its young ones have left the nest, teaching them to kill their own prey by dashing amongst a covey of ptarmigan poults, which gives the awkward young Eagle a good opportunity of catching one when separated from the old birds. On a sheep farm, where game is scarce, it cannot be denied that Eagles do a great deal of harm in the lambing season; but in such cases it is best to take the eggs as soon as laid, which does not cause them to leave the district, though it relieves them of the necessity of providing food for the young ones. I do not think that the Golden Eagle often lays a second time after its nest has been robbed, and although an instance may happen occasionally, it is certainly not the rule.

On a bright hot day, without much wind, Eagles are fond of soaring round and round at a great height above the top of a mountain; more, I think, for exercise than in search of prey, as the hill-top itself is sufficiently elevated to command a great extent of country. In this manner they can fly for some time without any perceptible motion of the wings, though the tail is often turned from side to side to guide the flight. The points of the primary quills are always rather turned up and separated, as is shown in one of Landseer's beautiful pictures in which an Eagle is flying across a loch to a dead stag which has already been discovered by a fox.

The last few words are worth noting, as one of the many testimonies borne by observers of nature to the fidelity of a great painter's brush. Landseer's close observation of the peculiar action of the primary quills in flying, may be classed, for its fine imaginative realism, with Turner's subtle perception of the secret of nether-vapour effects in Loch Coruisk—*i.e.*, the steaming of the rain-soaked rocks and crags under the heat of the sun.

Next in rank to the Golden Eagle stands the Erne,—a pluckier and altogether a fiercer bird, resembling in character one of those fierce Highland caterans, who were wont to flock in the neighbourhood of its haunts. In spite of the brutal butchery of keepers and collectors, this noble bird, unlike the other, still abounds, breeding in all the headlands of Skye, on the breast of one of Macleod's Maidens, in the wild Scuir of Eigg, in Scalpa, North Uist, Shiant Isles, Benbecula, and in Lewis and Harris. He is an unclean feeder, seldom slaughtering his own food, but seeking everywhere for garbage—dead sheep, stranded fish, or a salmon out of the neck of which the otter has taken its own tasty bite. His eyrie is generally among the most inaccessible crags, but he has been known to rear the mighty fabric in a tree, in the midst of some lonely island. Macgillivray found a Sea Eagle's nest in an island in a Hebridean lake, in a mound of rock 'not higher than could have been reached with a fishing-rod.' He varies greatly in size, 'some specimens measuring only six feet from tip to tip of the wings, while others are at least one half more.' He is pugnacious as a Cock-robin, and as vulgar as a Vulture, but he can be tamed, and in his tame state becomes an interesting pet. The finest extant specimen is in the Stornoway collection of Sir James Matheson; it was killed in the island of Lewis, and is of gigantic size, and very light in colour.

Many other rapacious birds frequent the Hebrides, from the Osprey down to the Kestrel, or Wind-hover; but the most interesting of all, perhaps, is the Peregrine

Falcon, so lovely in form and plumage, and so elegant of flight. The Peregrine breeds in all the outer islands, on the outlying rocks of Haskair, and even in St. Kilda. He is a murderous fellow, killing far more than he can eat, for the sheer sake of killing, twisting off the head of a snipe or a ptarmigan as unconcernedly as a waiter draws a bottle of beer! When he resides near the sea, he makes sad havoc among the Puffins and Guillemots. Next to him, in point of beauty, is his swift little kinsman, the Merlin, pluckiest of all the hawks, and deftest in the hunt. Game to the bone is the Soog, as he is called by the Celts, and will tackle a quarry out of all proportion to his strength. Snipes and Golden Plovers are his favourite feeding, and he will beat the marshes and sea-sands as carefully as an old pointer beats the turnips in September.

While the Eagle and Hawks hunt by day, the Owls prowl by night. These latter birds are not numerous in the Hebrides, the short-eared Owl being the most common; but we have here and there seen the tawny Owl hovering on the skirts of the plantations, oftentimes enough put up awkwardly by the dogs when beating cover, and likely to share a sudden fate at the hands of some bungler, unless protected by the sympathetic 'It's only an Old Wife—poor thing!' of some friendly keeper. The last Owl we saw was last night, beating the margin of Loch Bee for mice, with that curious limp flap of its downy wing, and occasionally resting as still as stone on the overhanging cone of a damp boulder, in just the same attitude in which we had not long before seen one of

his kinsmen resting on Robert Browning's shoulder, in the very heart of London. As to the White Owl, the *true* Cailleach, or Old Woman, she seems to have taken some deathly offence at our islands, for though there is a ruin on every headland, sorry a one of them all will she inhabit. Her ghastly presence would indeed become the gloaming hour, when the moon is shining on the ruined belfry of Icolmkill; but not even *there*, where the Spirit of the sea-loving Saint still walks o' nights, is her weird cry heard, or her ghostly flight beheld.

> Not a whit of her tuwhoo!
> Her to woo to her tuwhit!

We have sought her in vain in Iona, in Dunstaffnage, in Rodel, and in many kindred places, chiefly desolate graveyards; finding in her stead, among the tombs, only the little Clacharan,[1] in his white necktie, cluck-clucking as monotonously as a death-watch, and conducting eternally, on his own account, a kind of lonely *spirit-rapping*, in the most appropriate place. Among the same desolate homes of the dead, we have also found (as Dr. Gray seems to have found) the Sea-gulls coming to rest for the night, stealing through the twilight with a slow flight, which might be mistaken, at the first glance, for that of the Cailleach herself. What the Stone-chat is to graveyards, the Dipper is to lonely burns. He has many names in the Isles,—*Lon uisge*, *Gobha dubh nan Allt*, &c.—but none so sweet as the name familiar to every Saxon ear, that of Water-Ouzel. Who has not

[1] Celtic name of the Stone-chat (*Saxicola Rubicola*).

encountered the little fellow, with his light eye and white breast, dipping backwards and forwards as he sits on a stone amid the tiny pools and freshets, and rising swiftly to follow with swift but exact flight the windings and twistings of the stream? and who that has ever so met him, has failed to see in his company his faithful and inseparable little mate? He likes the waterfall and the brawling linn, as well as the dark pools amid the green and mossy heath; and he is to be found building from head to foot of every mountain that can boast a burn, however tiny and unpretending. The young are born with the cry of water in their ears; often the nest where they lie and cheep is within a few feet of a torrent, the voice of which is a roaring thunder; and close at hand, amid the spray, the little father-ouzels sit on a mossy stone, and sing aloud.

What pleasures have great princes? &c.,

they seem to be crying, in the very words of the old song. To search for water-shells and eat the toothsome larvæ of the water-beetle, and to have the whole of a mountain brook for kingdom,—what royal lot can compare with this?

Whiles thro' a linn the burnie plays,
  Whiles thro' a glen it wimples,
Whiles bickering thro' the golden haze
  With flickering dauncing dazzle,
Whiles cookin' underneath the braes
  Beneath the flowing hazel![1]

[1] The lover of Burns must forgive blunders, as I quote from memory.

To the eye of the little feathered king and queen, the bubbling waters are a world miraculously tinted and sweet with summer sound. The life of the twain is full of calm joy. So at least thinks the angler, as he crouches under the bank from the shower, and sees the cool drops splashing like countless pearls round the Ouzel's mossy throne in the midst of the pool. We hear for the first time, on the authority of Doctor Gray, that the Ouzel has been proscribed and decimated in many Highland parishes, because, forsooth, he is supposed to interfere with the rights of human fishermen! In former times, whoever slew one of these lovely birds received as his reward the privilege of fishing in the close season; and a reward of sixpence a head is this day given for the 'Water Craw' in some parts of Sutherlandshire. To such a pass come mortal ignorance and greed!—ignorance, here quite unaware that the Ouzel never touches the spawn of fish at all; and greed, unwilling to grant to a bird so gentle and so beautiful even a share of the prodigal gifts of nature.

Far more persecuted than the Bird of the Burn is that other frequenter of inland waters, the Kingfisher: so lovely, that every cruel hand is raised against his life; so rare through such slaughter, that one may now search long and far without ever perceiving the azure gleam of its wing. Its head is not unlike that of a Heron, on a diminutive scale; and its attitude, as it sits motionless for hours together, on some bough overhanging the stream, is heron-like in its steadfastness and patience. Unsocial and solitary, it deposits its pink-white eggs and

rears its young in a hole in the green bank. Flashing past, it seems like a winged emerald; in repose, its colour is ruddy brown. Seen in any light, it is a thing of perfect beauty, not to be spared from the precious things of the student of nature. To these Outer Hebrides, it never comes; but it has been found in the island of Skye. The dark, shrubless banks of these streams do not attract it; and, moreover, for so sportsmanlike and indefatigable a bird, the fishing is bad. It loves a stream shaded with alders and dwarf willows, and affects, too, spots well-warmed by the sun. When the buds of the water-lilies blow, and the well-oiled leaves float around them, when the dragon-fly poises in the leaves and gleams brilliantly, when the sun shines golden overhead and, below in the pool, you see the shadows of the motionless trout on the bright stones—*then*, creeping near, warily, look for the Kingfisher. There he sits, on a green branch near the mouth of his dwelling, arrayed as Solomon never was in all his glory, and shadowed by the willow tree,

> That grows aslant the brook,
> And shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.

The sun creeps behind a cloud for a moment; a tiny trout splashes, leaving a circle that widens and fades. What was that, the flash of an emerald or the gleam of some passing insect? 'Twas the King of Fishers darting down to seize his tiny prey; but so swiftly is he back again to his point of vantage, that he scarcely seems to have stirred at all.

We sit dreaming, while a panorama of past scenes floats by, each scene surrounded by its presiding Spirit of a Bird. In the dizzy air, on the 'ribbed sea sands,' through dark pine woods paved with azure flowers, amid lone isles blackening in the sea, over swamp, bog, and rainbow-kindled marsh, we seem to be winding our ever-changing way. The Curlew calls, the Snipe drums, the Blackbird whistles, the Kestrel hovers, the Tern wavers, and the Grey-lag twangs. A little while ago we were in the woods near Bonaw, hearkening by nightfall to the monotonous calls of the grasshopper warblers; a moment since, amid the fir plantations on the banks of Loch Feochan, we were hearkening to the deep-toned plaint of the Cushat, and the whistling of the Mavis, just as Tannahill heard them of old in the 'bonnie woods of Craigielea'—

> Far ben thy dark green planting's shade
> The cushat croodles amorouslie;
> The mavis, down thy bughted glade,
> Gars echo ring frae tree to tree!

and *now*, we are floating on the storm-vexed waters of the Minch, out of sight of land, with a hurricane of rain around us (though the month is July), while a number of tiny Storm-petrels, tempted out doubtless by the infernal weather, are hovering up and down, swift as insects, close to the yacht's stern. The tiny Petrel (*Thalassidroma Pelagica*, the bungling pedants have christened him; and, good heavens! what a mountain of a name for such a mite of a bird!) breeds everywhere in the Hebrides, affecting chiefly the most exposed quarters,

such as Canna, Rum, Eigg, and the heads of Skye. They fly chiefly by night, but a good stiff breeze, especially if it promises to rise, often brings them out by daylight: whence their appearance is by many fishermen considered ominous of bad weather.

Dr. Gray's description of their flight is perfect. 'There they were, pattering the top of each wave, the broken crest of each they barely touched as it rose and threatened our bulwarks. Several times they seemed as if they might have been touched by the hand. . . . They did not appear to pick up anything, but untiringly followed the rising and falling of the water—now going down into a hollow, and now rising with the wave until the edge broke and curled over, when the little feet were let down with a gentle tripping movement as if trying to get a footing on the treacherous deep. . . . Sometimes, as one of them remained in the trough of the sea, until the wave seemed ready to engulf the little creature, it mounted sideways to let it pass, and down it went on the other side with 'contemptuous celerity.' The tiny black moth of a bird, measuring not six inches in length, burrows in the earth like a Puffin, and lays one small white egg; and after incubation, it feeds its small fluff of white down with oil secreted in its crop. So greasy is its body, that one has only to run a wick through it to have a capital lamp ready made. Its appearance at sea is deemed ominous enough by sailors (whence its familiar name of 'Mother Carey's Chicken'), and in good truth with some reason, for it seldom ventures far abroad in respectable weather. Nothing can be more

delicious, to our taste, than the following little sketch of the Storm-petrel's habits, and the sympathetic reader will thank us for transcribing it entire :—

Twenty years ago my valued correspondent, Mr. Graham, of whom I now take leave in these pages, communicated some very interesting notes on the Stormy Petrel, the insertion of the substance of which may not inappropriately bring my labours to a close. Mr. Graham became acquainted with the bird through a mere accident. He had, while residing at Iona, made frequent excursions to the famous isle of Staffa in a small boat of his own named 'The Ornithologist,' and on one of these occasions had been compelled, through a sudden storm, to remain alone all night on this isolated roosting-place under shelter of his boat, which he drew up on the landing and turned bottom upwards for the purpose. Of course, in the circumstances, sleep was impossible ; and during the night he heard the most curious buzzing sounds emanating from the rough stony ground he was lying upon. They were not continuous, but broken every ten seconds or so by a sharp *click*. Waiting until daylight, he found the strange music issuing from beneath his feet ; guided by the sound he commenced removing the heavy stones, and being encouraged in his labours by hearing the sounds nearer and more distinct—sometimes ceasing, then recommencing—he worked away till the noise and rolling of the rocks seemed to provoke the subterranean musician to renewed efforts, until with a vigorous exertion the last great stone was rooted out and the mystery laid bare. He saw a little black object shuffling off, leaving its small white egg lying on a blade of dry grass which protected it from the hard rock. It made no attempt to escape, as if dazzled by the glare of daylight, or stunned by the depth of its misfortune, but lay passively in his hand when he took it up, uttering only a faint squeak of surprise at the outrage. From this romantic island Mr. Graham afterwards procured several young birds, which he kept in confine-

ment until they became fledged. He reared them solely upon cod-liver oil, which they sucked from a feather dipped into it, clattering their beaks and shaking their heads with evident satisfaction. Towards nightfall they became exceedingly restless and active ; and on being taken out of their box they sat on the table and set their wings in motion so rapidly that they ceased to be discernible. Their eyes being closed during this exercise, the whirring of their wings apparently fanned the little fellows into the notion that they were far out at sea, travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour ; and as their bodies became buoyant by the action of the wings, their little feet could retain no hold of the slippery mahogany ; so the exhibition generally ended by the poor Petrels falling backwards and disappearing over the edge of the table. Two of these pets died and were sent to me through the post accompanied by a note from my friend, informing me that they had both departed this life during the roaring of an equinoctial storm.

*Requiescant in pace !* Who shall say that stone walls do make a prison, or iron bars a cage, when even a captive Mother Carey's Chicken, by 'whirring its wings rapidly,' can 'fan itself into the notion that it is far away at sea?' Think of that, ye chamber-followers of the Byronic! Even in your false romantic flights, when, molly-coddling in a study (or a stew), you make believe to be leading corsairs to death, and offering proud love to dark-eyed Eastern maids, ye are still far behind the little Petrel in his prison. *He* has seen veritable storm, and his mind travels back to delights well-known and well-loved ; ye, on the other hand, shut your eyes like him, merely conjure up the vapours of an idle fancy, have no experience to record, no delight to remember that is not a delusion and a closet-sham.

So much for the Petrel, whose very name is breezy and smelling of sea-salt. What bird comes next? What picture next appears? In a lonely lochan, glossy black, and with never reed or flower to relieve its sadness, under a dark sky seamed with silvern streaks, there rises a rocky isle, and close to the isle swims the Learga, or Black-throated Diver, troubling the brooding silence with his weird cry—*Deoch! deoch! tha'n loch a traogbadh!*[1] Sunset on Loch Scavaig, the ocean glassy-still, and the Coolins rising lurid in the red light streaming over the western ocean, while the Solan drops like a bullet to his prey, and

> The cormorant flaps o'er a sleek ocean-floor
> Of tremulous mother-of-pearl.

Twilight on the slopes of the mountains of Mull, and the evening star glimmering over the dark edge of the fir-wood, while the ghost-moths begin to issue from their green hiding-places, and the Night gar, looming on the summit of a tree, utters his monotonous call. A spring morning, with broken clouds and a rainbow, gleaming on the isles of Loch Awe, and cuckoos multitudinous as leaves in Vallambrosa telling their name to all the hills. The prospects are endless, the cries confusing as the chorus of birds in Aristophanes:

> Toro, toro, toro, toro, toro, toro, toro, toro, toro,
> Kickabau, kickabau,
> Toro, toro, toro, toro, tobrix!

[1] 'Drink! drink! the lake is nearly dried up.'

With these for guides, one may wander further and see stranger scenes than ever came under the eyes of the Nephelococcygians; but, indeed, modern culture scarcely knows even their names, and the spots where they dwell scarcely attract even the passing tourist. Wonderful indeed is modern ignorance, only to be paralleled by modern fatuity. Few men know the difference between the Birch and the Hornbeam, the Curlew and the Whimbrel. Modern authors, poets particularly, write as if they had been brought up in a dungeon or a hothouse, never breathing the fresh air or beholding plants and birds in a state of nature. 'It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before.' The pursuit of false comforts, the desire of vain accomplishments, the sucking of social lollipops, these are modern vanities. We were speaking the other day with one of the best educated men in England, a party finished to the finger-tips, great in philosophy, and 'in Pindar and poets unrivalled.' He had never seen an eagle or a red deer; he could neither shoot, fish, nor swim; he was sea-sick whenever he left dry land; he believed the 'sheets' of a boat to be her 'sails;' he knew (as Browning expresses it) 'the Latin word for Parsley,' but he had never even heard of 'white' heather. For this being, his University had done all it could, and had turned him out in the world about as ignorant as a parrot, and as helpless, for all manly intents and purposes, as a new-born baby.

> The world is too much with us. Late or soon,
> Getting or spending, we lay waste our powers.
> Little we see in Nature that is ours.

So far, at least, as the knowledge of birds is concerned, the ordinary extent of knowledge may be safely summed up in the memorable conversation attached to the cut in 'Punch'—'What's that, Bill? An '*Awk?*'—'No, stoopid; it's a *Howl!*' when in point of fact, if we remember rightly, the subject of conversation was an Erne!

That ''Awk' brings us, by a natural transition, to the Great Auk, or Garefowl, the very name of which alone makes ornithologists prick up their ears, and in which even vulgarity is *now* interested, because the species is supposed to be extinct. This extraordinary bird has from time immemorial been a theme for wonder-stricken travellers. Martin, in his 'Voyage to St. Kilda,' published in 1698, describes the Garefowl as 'above the size of a Solan Goose, of a black colour, red about the eyes, a large white spot under each eye, a long broad bill, stands stately, his whole body erected, his wings short, he flyeth not at all, layes his egg upon the bare rock, which, if taken away, he layes no more for that year; his egg is twice as big as that of a Solan Goose, and is variously spotted black, green, and dark.'

Sixty years later, the Rev. Kenneth Macaulay landed in St. Kilda, remained there a month, and afterwards wrote a history of the island. He writes thus of the Great Auk: 'I had not an opportunity of knowing a very curious fowl, sometimes seen upon this coast, and an absolute stranger, I am apt to believe, in every other part of Scotland. The men of Herta call it the Garefowl, corruptly, perhaps, instead of Rarefowl, a name probably given it by some one of those foreigners, whom either

choice or necessity drew into this secure region. This bird is above four feet in length, from the bill to the extremities of its feet; its wings are, in proportion to its size, very short, so that they can hardly poise or support the weight of its very large body. Its legs, neck, and bill are extremely long. It lays the egg, which, according to the account given me, exceeds that of a goose no less than the latter exceeds the egg of a hen, close by the sea mark, being incapable, on account of its bulk, to soar up to the cliffs. It makes its appearance in the month of July. The St. Kildians do not receive an annual visit from this strange bird as from all the rest in the list, and from many more. It keeps at a distance from them, they know not where, for a course of years. From what land or ocean it makes its uncertain voyages to their isle is perhaps a mystery. A gentleman who had been in the West Indies informed me that, according to the description given of him, he must be the Penguin of that clime, a fowl that points out the proper soundings of seafaring people.'

Again, 1793, that delightful romancist, the Rev. John Lane Buchanan, wrote an account of St. Kilda and its birds, and averred that the Garefowl's egg 'exceeds that of a goose as much as that of the latter exceeds that of a hen.' Lastly, let us quote Dr. Gray's summary of the most recent appearances of the now missing bird :—

No recent visitor to the island of St. Kilda appears to have received any satisfactory information regarding the existence of the Great Auk there. There is not even the bare mention of it in the 'Journal of an Excursion to St. Kilda,' published in

Glasgow in 1838 by P. Maclean, a writer who furnishes an interesting account of the birds on the authority of the then resident clergyman, the Rev. Neil Mackenzie, who had been there eight years ; and Mr. John Macgillivray, who visited the island in 1840, was informed that though the bird was by no means of uncommon occurrence about St. Kilda, none had been known to breed there for many years past, and that the 'oldest inhabitant' only recollected the procuring of three or four examples. Mr. Elwes, who visited the island in H. M. S. 'Harpy' on May 22, 1868, has the following remarks in a valuable paper on the 'Bird Stations of the Outer Hebrides,' contributed to the 'Ibis' for 1869:—'On landing we were met by the minister, Mr. Mackay, who appeared very glad to see anyone, as may well be imagined. Strange to say, he did not seem to take any interest in or to know much about the birds, though he has been two years among the people whose thoughts are more occupied by birds than anything else, and who depend principally upon them for their living. I showed a picture of the Great Auk, which Mr. J. H. Gurney, Junr., had kindly sent me, to the people, some of whom appeared to recognise it, and said that it had not been seen for many years ; but they were so excited by the arrival of strangers, that it was impossible to get them to say more about it, and though Mr. Mackay promised to take down any stories or information about the bird that he could collect, when they had leisure to think about it, he has not as yet sent me any. I do not think, however, that more than two or three examples are at all likely to have been seen in the last forty years, as Mr. Atkinson of Newcastle, who went there in 1831, does not say a word about it in his paper [1] beyond mentioning the name, and neither John Macgillivray, who visited the place in 1840, nor Sir W. Milner, says that any specimen had been recently procured. I believe that Bullock was also there about 1818 ; and as he had not long before met with the species in Orkney, there is little doubt he would have

[1] 'Trans. Nat. Hist. Soc.,' Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1832.

mentioned it to somebody if he had heard of any having been recently procured at St. Kilda. I made every inquiry about this bird on the north and west coast of Lewis, and showed pictures of it to the fishermen ; but all agreed that nothing of the sort had been seen since they could remember.' Writing in 1861, Professor Newton, in a paper contributed by him to the 'Ibis' for that year, on Mr. Wolley's researches in Iceland respecting the Garefowl, states that Sir William Milner had informed him that within the last few years he had become possessed of a fine Great Auk, which he had reason to believe had been killed in the Hebrides. This specimen was found to have been stuffed with turf. The Great Auk is not mentioned by Dr. Patrick Neill in his 'Tour through the Orkney and Shetland Islands,' printed in 1806, a work which contains a full list of the birds known to inhabit that district; nor is it alluded to by Dr. John Barry in his 'History of the Orkney Islands,' which appeared in the following year. Negative evidence like this, however, may not carry much weight. Low, who died in 1795, but whose natural history manuscript was not published till 1813, remarks as follows :—'I have often inquired about the Great Auk especially, but cannot find it is ever seen here;'[1] yet nearly twenty years later it was found by Mr. Bullock, who was but a casual visitor. The following remarks from an interesting little work entitled, 'The Ornithologist's Guide to the Islands of Orkney and Shetland,' published in 1837, by Robert Dunn, now of Stromness, may not be out of place :— 'I have never seen a living specimen of this bird, nor do I believe it ever visits Shetland. I made inquiries at every place I visited, but no one knew it : had such a remarkable bird been seen there, I must have heard of it. During my stay at Orkney, and while on a visit at Papa Westra, I was informed by Mr. Trail, whom I had the pleasure of seeing two or three times, that a pair of these birds were constantly seen there for several years, and were christened by the people the King and

[1] 'Fauna Orcadiensis,' p. 107.

Queen of the Auks. Mr. Bullock, on his tour through these islands, made several attempts to obtain one, but was unsuccessful. About a fortnight after his departure one was shot and sent to him, and the other then forsook the place. Mr. Trail supposed they had a nest on the island, but on account of its exposed situation the surf must have washed the eggs from the rocks, and thus prevented any further increase.' Ten years later another little work on the 'Natural History of Orkney' was issued by Dr. W. B. Baikie and Mr. Robert Heddle, who thus speak of the Great Auk:—'This bird has not visited Orkney for many years. One was seen off Fair Isle in June 1798. A pair appeared in Papa Westra for several years.'

The ornithologists still hope; the prospect every day grows more depressing. The cruel hand of man has done its work, and the probability is that the Garefowl is extinct, dead as the Dodos, to which, in its inability to fly and its voracious tastes, it bore a strong resemblance. This vanishing away lends to the species a strange interest. Were Garefowls numerous as Puffins, we should esteem them little, wonder at them still less; but the charm of mystery has been given, and even our well-crammed man who could not tell a Birch from a Hornbeam, would be interested here. O Garefowl!—

> . . . Thee the shores and sounding seas
> Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,
> Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
> Where thou, perhaps, under the whelming tide,
> Visit'st the bottom of the wondrous world,—

if (as may well happen) there still exists some scattered survivor of thy race, woe to him, let him keep to his

Icelandic solitude; for a price is set upon his head, and even the half savage Lapp and Finn know his value in the white man's market. For our own part, our course even now lies St. Kilda-ward; and if, in some of these isolated waters, we should see the lost bird lingering, we shall be as wonder-stricken as one who should suddenly stumble upon the Dodo; but as to shooting or otherwise injuring a feather of the poor persecuted fellow, why, to parody the words of Canning's knife-grinder,

'We kill the Garefowl? We will see thee d—d first!'

We should rather endeavour to drive him out of danger,—to take him on board, for example, and run with him northward, to some solitary ocean isle; and afterwards to keep our secret; for were Professor Newton, or any other pundit, to hear of our offence, why, as Bottom has it, ''twere pity of our life!' Still, were our search crowned with success, to secure the bird, even for so friendly a purpose, would not be so easy. 'First *catch* your Garefowl!' It has been said that the bird was swift enough to elude even a six-oared boat, and if a survivor still swims, we pray with all our heart that Neptune or some other ocean-god may quadruple his speed!

We have had enough of this day-dream. Closing the book that has conjured up so many pleasant pictures, and looking forth for a moment, we see that the gale is abating, for the 'carry' above in the clouds is running as fast as the wind below on the water; and we must fly across the Minch to get last-month's letters.

# *SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES.*

## I.

## A MORNING IN COPENHAGEN.

'——They manage these things better in Denmark.'

THE air was full of a wet mist, familiar to the otherwise self-congratulatory people who dwell in the capital of Scotland. In the centre of the great square, surrounded by an admiring audience of street boys and street dogs, were certain military musicians, discoursing the martial strains of 'King Christian stod ved höjen Mast;' and in the far distance, innumerable dogs were answering in dismal discord. With no very lively feelings we hoisted our umbrella, sallied forth from our hotel, and made the best of our way through the narrow streets to the house of our friend the Professor. We found the old gentleman seated at his study window, with a coloured nightcap stuck on his white head, and the great black pipe between his teeth. For, like the old clergyman described by Andersen in his dismallest novel, 'he had but one fault—he smoked much tobacco, and very bad tobacco, and every portion of his attire was so impregnated with the smoky odour, that if it were sent

over all the seas in Europe, 'twould still preserve the flavour of the tight, strong-smelling, beloved canister.' We had arranged, the previous evening, to spend the morning together, in a stroll through the capital.

'Good morning!' said the Professor, with his feminine smile. 'Take a cup of coffee? The sun is already elbowing the clouds towards England, and by the time that you have drunk your coffee and I have finished my pipe, the rain will have ceased. Hearken!' he continued, as we sipped the black nectar. 'The dogs down yonder made the whole night hideous, and even now they are not all silent. This canine pest you must have remarked is one of the characteristics of our capital. Copenhagen is as overrun with dogs as Constantinople. Here, however, they are not houseless, not vagabond hordes; no, they are at home; for every gentleman, every lady, every boy, has his or her dog; every house its Cerberus, in the shape of one or more dogs. But this, being so close to the harbour, is the worst part of the whole city. On board the merchant and fishing boats, they howl all night long, and Heaven help him who lies in the neighbourhood, and does not sleep heavily! In the daytime, there are puppies barking from windows, curs from doorsteps; tradesmen's dogs, chained dogs, and loose dogs; dogs indoors, dogs in bed, dogs at table even—dogs of all kinds, of all sizes, and all degrees, yelping everywhere! They throng the street, they congregate in villainous groups in the squares, they howl from carriages, they sit moaning in the fish-market, wistfully eyeing the fish, they creep even into the churches, and mingle their

whining with the drone of the preacher! In fact, here they swarm, to paraphrase the words of your great modern poet:

> 'Great dogs, small dogs, lean dogs, brawny dogs,
> Brown dogs, black dogs, grey dogs, tawny dogs,
> Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
> Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
> Cocking tails, and pricking whiskers,
> Families by tens and dozens!'

'What! you read Browning!' we exclaimed, with some astonishment.

'I do indeed,' replied the Professor, 'and so do many of my friends. Let me tell you, sir, that we in Denmark do know something of English literature, while you in England know next to nothing of the literature of the North. The only man of whom you really do know anything is Hans Christian Andersen; *he* represents northern poesy in your eyes, while many of us will not allow that he is a poet at all. Holberg, Evald, Baggesen, Oehlenschläger, Grundtvig, Rahbek, Ingemann, Holberg, Molbech! what do you know of these; to say nothing of a host of smaller names, to say nothing of any of the great names of Sweden? But come! it rains no longer. We will promenade!'

Forth we fared. The Professor had exchanged his nightcap for an old wideawake, but the inevitable black pipe was still fixed between his teeth. As we jogged along the unclean and narrow streets, he discoursed eloquently on the beauties of his native city; but as a stranger could not quite see the force of his expressions,

it is useless to quote them. We soon reached the fish-market, a large square bounded at one end by a canal communicating with the sea. Close to the canal, with a background of black masts and sails, sat the fisher-women, presiding over tanks of water wherein the fish they were offering for sale swam living. Whenever a customer came, the great strong arms were plunged into the water, and a struggling fish was selected for inspection. Leaning over the sides of the barges behind, smoking their black cutty pipes, and watching their brawny better halves humbly, were the fishermen. But heedless of the cries of the women inviting us to purchase, we passed the canal by a drawbridge.

'That is the King's Palace,' said the Professor, pointing to a large building which stood straight before us. 'It contains much to interest the antiquary, besides a very fair picture gallery, and is open to the public two or three days a week. But we will not go there this morning. Hard by is something which will interest you more. You observe that square building, with the queer paintings on its walls. Well, that is Thorwaldsen's Museum. It was erected, as you have perhaps heard, by public subscription, to contain the works of art which our great sculptor bequeathed to his country. It is his Museum, and it is his Mausoleum also—for it contains his grave.'

We approached the Museum, on the exterior of which, in vari-coloured cement, is represented the sculptor's return to Fatherland, after an absence of eighteen years, in 1838. On one side he is pictured landing before the

enthusiastic crowd ; on the other, are paintings representing the transport of the works to the Museum. The façade of the building represents Victory in her fiery car. Passing in by a side door, the Professor led the way to the centre of the Museum,—a wide open space roofed only by the heavens, and paven with stone. 'This is the grave,' said the Professor, standing with uncovered head before a tomb—a simple square, with the name and death-day of Thorwaldsen graven on the side, roses growing above, and a bouquet of field-flowers laid reverently by some gentle hand in the midst of all!

'In Denmark,' observed the old gentleman, 'we honour our great men *thus;* but we do more—we help them to that eminence which is to be our glory. If a poor lad of Copenhagen show a genius for painting, we educate him with public money ; and when he has learned the rudiments of his art, we give him, still with public money, a stipend which enables him to travel abroad for years. Poets, painters, scholars, historians,—all have the same chance ; all get help at the outset, and the glorious education of travel. I have heard,' he added, with emphasis, 'that in England you manage such things rather differently. I am not aware that your Court encourages genius, though your Prince, if the newspapers speak truly, deigns to patronise it occasionally—when it burns in the bosom of a fireman or a comic actor!'

'In England,' we replied, 'it is believed every man, be he genius or fool, should fight his own way upward by the might of his own brain and hands.'

'Very pretty. You starve a man of genius, or suffer him to waste his best years in menial labour, or brutalise his brain by the work of a flippant and worthless press; and then, if he *does* happen to sing you an immortal song or write you an immortal chronicle, you take all the credit to yourselves, just as if you had not been putting obstacle on obstacle, year after year, in the way of God Almighty's purpose! A genius, say I, is not a beast of burden! Nine true poets out of ten, I aver, are like *immortelles*—they require the most delicate attention to bring out their beauties! Suffering should purify; but such suffering as ye entail *brutalises*. Hunger will turn a lyric poet into a wild animal! Debt will convert the cry which should be music for ages into an oath which dies in the undermost caverns of Hell!'

'*Paupertas impulet audax!*' we said, smiling at the Professor's warmth.

'Stuff! Poverty, in such a society as yours, does no genius good. The beasts of Germans are nearly as bad. Do you mean to tell me that these would not have got still grander things out of Schiller if they had treated him more liberally? Because he was fond of luxury and good living, should he have been compelled to work like a jacketless slave, turning off to order the 'History of the Thirty Years' War,' when he might have soared still higher in the region of eternal song. You quite ignore the infinite *possibilities* of genius. You are satisfied if a poet gives you a diamond, when he might be rearing ye a palace of diamonds. We in Denmark act differently, and never lose sight of what a man *may*

do. We make a grand speculation of a promising life, and are not at all angry at losing a few miserable pounds if the speculation fails.'

So saying, he led the way into the building, where, for upwards of two hours, we regaled our eyes and minds with the contemplation of Thorwaldsen's works. It is not our intention to describe these works here; to attempt to do so at all would be far to transcend the limits of a short paper. Enough to say, that the Museum contains much splendid workmanship, interspersed with a great deal of trash. The 'Jason,' for example, is striking, while some of the bas-reliefs are beneath contempt. What struck us most of all, on cool reflection, was the enormous amount of work Thorwaldsen had been able to get through—almost single-handed, so to speak. We expressed as much to the Professor, as we walked away.

'Why, yes!' he said, 'Thorwaldsen did manage to leave a good many monuments behind him. We Danes, I will confess, are a queer compound of laziness and energy. Thorwaldsen was by nature inclined to be lazy; so are we all—'tis the national characteristic. But when we do work, my friend, we work like those Trolls in the story, who were able to build a city in a single night. All our great writers have been very prolific, yet most of them have taken plenty of pleasuring. Oehlenschläger enjoyed life hugely, yet what heaps of printed matter has he left behind him! I think myself we should write better if we did not write quite so much. The bulk of our literature lacks that artistic

finish which slow and conscientious workmanship alone can give. We lounge as long as we can with our hands in our pockets and our pipes in our mouths; and the *cacoethes scribendi* seizes on us so suddenly and violently, that what we gain oftentimes in heat we lose in harmony. Thorwaldsen has left no statue, Oehlenschläger has left no tragedy, Holberg has left no comedy, which can be denominated absolutely complete of its kind—excellent and perfect as a work of art.'

Here a handsome elderly gentleman, dressed in simple black, passed by, taking off his hat to the Professor, with a polite smile. The Professor responded, somewhat deferentially.

'Rather a distinguished-looking person?' said the Professor, quietly.

'Undoubtedly. A brother author?'

'Not exactly. That gentleman is *the King of Denmark*.' And noticing our look of surprise, the Professor continued, '*These* things also we manage better in the North. His Majesty moves among us where he pleases like a simple gentleman, and he has never any reason to regret admitting his people to a certain amount of familiarity. Let the veriest tradesman recognise him in the street, and salute him, he will gracefully respond. He is not Christian the First, but he is the first of Christians, this King of ours. You noticed how he saluted me? All, I assure you, on account of that little work of mine on the Gnostic Philosophy. More than once, when I have been wandering in the park, we have encountered; he has addressed me, and we have fired away on the

subjects dearest to my heart. Our King, in brief, is what he ought to be—a father among his children. We do not, like some other countries, illustrate the fable of the Donkey reigning as king over the other animals—among whom, if I recollect rightly, the LION himself was included.'

By this time we had reached the more populous part of the city. As we passed through a narrow street, the Professor pointed to a window on the second floor.

'In that room,' he said, 'Jens Baggesen passed a certain portion of his youth.'

'Baggesen?' we repeated. 'I have heard the name, but really know nothing of the owner.'

'Baggesen,' said the Professor, 'was the greatest humorist, the brightest satirist, that Denmark ever produced. I will tell you about him as we walk along. His father was a clerk—a poor simple fellow, and his early days were passed in the country town of Korsöer, where he was born in 1764. After a series of misfortunes, he was sent to the University, where he supported himself by occupying his spare hours in private teaching. Despite privations of the most intense description, he made great progress in classical and philosophical studies, and passed his examination with honour. In his spare time he amused himself by writing comic verses; these verses were speedily popular among his classmates, and were circulated by them among the outside public. Finally, when only twenty years of age, he was induced to publish his "Comic Stories in Verse." In an instant, as it were, he found himself famous. The success of his book

was enormous, and the boy of twenty was at once recognised by one and all as the greatest comic poet of Denmark. He went to bed a poor student, and awoke famous—with a rich market for every line he chose to write. Honours showered fast upon him. He was patronised and petted by the noblest in the land ; and soon, in their society, he derived the one completion his genius needed—elegance of polish and refinement of taste. He now lounged about in Danish style for a considerable period, passing the most of his time in the country houses of the nobility. In a fit of activity he translated "Niel Klim's Underground Journey," which Holberg had written in Latin. This story, which bears a strong resemblance to "Gulliver's Travels," became highly popular. Not so "Holger Danske," a comedy founded on Wieland's "Oberon." This last was dreadfully abused and satirised, and poor Jens Baggesen showed all the biliousness of his brethren. For Jens, you must know, was an irritable fellow—savage in attack, jealous of rivalry, feverishly ambitious, and impatient of censure. He speedily succeeded in making a great number of enemies ; and there is no saying what might have happened to him, had not Government granted him a liberal stipend to travel whithersoever he pleased for three years.

'He describes his travels in one of his pleasantest books —the "Labyrinth"—a kind of autobiographical gossip on Baggesen and men and things. A romantic meeting in Switzerland with a beautiful and accomplished girl, Sophia Haller, decided his fate matrimonially. He

married, and after travelling through Germany returned to Copenhagen. He did not linger long. Domestic troubles came upon him ; his wife fell sick, and was ordered to a warmer climate. He hastened her removal ; but they had only reached Kiel when she died in childbed, bearing him twin sons. He was inconsolable, of course ; but in about a year after his wife's death he returned to Denmark with another wife. Again he rambled forth, dwelling in Germany and France, and acquiring a good deal of vicious taste in both. He returned again, solicited and received a fresh stipend, and again departed. Thus, for many a year, did Baggesen range Europe at his country's expense, writing by fits and starts, still petted by the Danish public, still indulged in a thousand eccentricities by the liberal Government. Better had he stayed at home. Not content with wasting much valuable time in idleness, he conceived the idea of becoming a German instead of a Danish writer, and thence we may date his fall. His wild satiric mood at last pushed him to such an extreme that he forgot his country, ignored the innumerable benefits that fatherland had heaped upon him, and mocked Denmark in her bitterest hour of sorrow—the time of Nelson's bombardment of Copenhagen. This was a wrong never to be forgiven ; but meantime, while he had neglected his opportunities, the crown of song was snatched from his brow by a new aspirant, the man you see here represented in stone.'

We had come into a wide street, and were standing before the large statue of a sitting figure—a strong, bold,

Danish face, darkened by the mist and smoke of the capital.

'This is our high priest of song,' said the Professor, 'Adam Oehlenschläger.'

'I know a little of him.'

'Poor Baggesen, on his last return to Denmark, found that the tide had turned against him in favour of the young tragedian. Picture his mortification and rage! No writer can equal your comic one for savage irritability. He abused the plays of Oehlenschläger both in print and by word of mouth, ridiculed them in a style which would have been vastly ludicrous had it not been so strongly coloured with jealousy and spleen. But the new star stood firm. Thenceforward the career of Baggesen was a sad journey downward. He hied to Paris with his wife. There, in 1821, he fell terribly ill, and was only saved by the tender attention of Prince Christian of Denmark, who had him nursed in his own house. Shortly afterwards his wife died, and was followed speedily by his dearest child. Under these sorrows he gradually sank. As his end drew nigh, a mad yearning came upon him to die in his native land, which had used him so gently and been repaid so ungenerously. He died on the way home, at Hamburg; and the poet whom he had abused revenged himself by writing a glowingly eulogistic poem on his death.'

'Your system of stipends rather failed with Baggesen,' we cried; 'the gentleman was too flighty. If he had been an English author, hard knocks at the outset would have

taught him better manners. Was Oehlenschläger as lucky—pecuniarily, I mean?'

'Denmark has nothing to reproach herself with in either case. The men had equal advantages, but Oehlenschläger was a finer, sterner genius than Baggesen, though even he had the national characteristics I have hinted at. He was the contemporary of Wieland, of Goethe, of Herder, and Jean Paul, and all that wondrous generation of intelligences who have founded German literature. He, too, belonged to the lower classes, though he never had to encounter the harsh lot that befell Baggesen in youth. He began to write little comedies and poems when very young, and his mind was soon attracted by the drama. He neglected his studies, and haunted the theatre. At last, having determined to become an actor, he solicited and obtained an engagement at the Grand Theatre. The result, as you may imagine, was unfavourable in the extreme. But I am not going to linger over the life of Oehlenschläger. Read his "Autobiography." What I want to point out in his life is the matter which reflects on our treatment of our great authors. Oehlenschläger was still but a boy, and had but recently failed as an actor, when he received his travelling stipend, and was free to make or mar himself. Here our liberality was amply repaid by a succession of works which will live as long as our country endures,—and it, I assure you, in spite of the attitude of England in the Schleswig-Holstein business, is in no immediate danger of extinction. But here we are at the

harbour, with the sea air in our nostrils. Ah!' cried the old gentleman, pointing out seaward, 'so long as we Danes have the water round us, and the sea spray dashing in on our faces in this fashion, we may, like our authors, be a little lazy at times, but our blood will have the ocean tumult in it, and we shall be too seaman-like to regard ungenerously those beacon-lights of genius who point out our path, and shine over us on the way.'

## II.

### THE OLD BALLADS OF DENMARK.

THE old ballads of Denmark, regarded from a merely antiquarian point of view, strike one as being somewhat fantastical mosaic. The region to which they introduce us is that of Tradition, not of History—albeit historical personages occasionally appear in mythical garb, passing along, like the shadowy generations of Banquo, to weird and monotonous music. Not until we have made up our minds to discard history altogether, not until we have assumed something of the credulous spirit of the men who made the melodies long ago, shall we be able to pass through the process of true enjoyment, and reach the point of criticism pure and proper. We shall get no good by being sceptical. We must believe in heroes of gigantic build, in dragons, in serpents, in weird spirits of the water and the air. We must not fall to picking and grumbling because the music to which we listen is imperfect: here a modern touch, closely following a tone of undoubted antiquity; there a style undoubtedly bred far north; and, close by, another clearly germane to the lands of the orange and cicala. We are in an enchanted region, listening to extraordinary

sounds. Heroes and spirits of all places and countries meet together in alternate discord and harmony. Directly we grow too curious, we are pelted with such a confusion of dates, contradictions, and flotsam and jetsam, that we begin to think ballad-reading a labour.

But when we proceed in the right way, when we are in the humour to enjoy fine human truths without caring much about specially authenticated illustrations of such truths, we speedily find ourselves transported to an atmosphere swarming with creatures of delight and wonder. Everything we see is colossal, things as well as men being fashioned on a mighty scale; the adventurous nature burns fiercely as fire, lives fall thickly as the autumn leaves, and nearly every man is a big warrior. Werner the Raven sweeps across the seas, watched by Rosmer the Merman on his solitary rocks, and sending down a storm to catch the ship of a Danish king and queen. The mermaid combs her silken locks upon the shore. The Trold, or Goblin, holds his wild revels in the mountain. Two powers exist—physical strength and the command of the supernatural. We are by no means confined to Denmark, but flit all over Europe;—fighting with King Diderik of Berne, dreaming in a non-real Constantinople, as well as standing among giants on the Dovre Fjeld. But in our wanderings we again and again leave the battle-field, and come upon 'places of nestling green,' where abide love, and sorrow, and pity, and those gentler emotions which move the souls of all men in all times. We have love-making, ploughing and tilling, drinking and song-singing. At

every step we meet a beautiful maiden, frequently unfortunate, generally in love, and invariably with golden hair.

This treasury of poetic lore might have been quite lost to us but for a timely accident. It was in the year 1586 that Queen Sophia of Denmark, being storm-bound for some days at Knutstrup, passed the time very pleasantly in discussing literary subjects with the learned and able pastor, Andrew Söffrensön (to whom, by the way, she had been introduced by Tycho Brahe), and touched among other topics upon the unpublished ballad-literature of the country. The result was that the pastor, about five years afterwards, published and edited the first hundred of Danish 'Kjœmpe Viser.' A hundred years afterwards, Peter Say, another ecclesiastic, and a gossip after Isaak Walton's own heart, republished the work of Söffrensön, with the addition of one hundred pieces of his own collecting, and dedicated the whole—ballads, fantastical preface, and industrious notes—to Queen Amelia. From that time forth the stock has gone on increasing, and much useful information concerning its growth has been added from time to time by various editors. The ballads themselves may be divided into four classes: the 'Kjœmpe Viser,' or battle pieces; the historical pieces; the poems founded on popular superstition; and the poems dealing with the domestic affections. Much as these effusions have been altered, mutilated, or improved upon, in the course of transmission from generation to generation, they contain many a soft strain, many a

rough tone, many an antique meaning, which long ago mingled with the harps of the wandering minstrels—nay, which may have been familiar, for anything we know to the contrary, to the very Scalds themselves.

At the time when Andrew Söffrensön published his centenary, the ballads had been floating about the land for centuries, and the rude melodies to which some of them may still be sung stirred the blood and moistened the eyes in many a peasant household. Transmitted in the same manner as the Scottish and Breton ballads, as a precious heritage from father to son, they were preserved by popular recitation. With all their contradictions and inconsistencies, they are national—distinguishable from the Scottish writings of the same class, although possessing many delicate points of similarity. As for the themes, some are of German and others of southern origin, while many are clearly Scandinavian. The adventurers who swept southward, to range themselves under the banners of strange chiefs, not seldom returned home brimful of wild exaggerated stories, to beguile many a winter night; and these stories in process of time became so imbedded in popular tradition, that it was difficult to guess whence they primarily came, and gathered so much moss of the soil in the process of rolling down the years, that their foreign colour soon faded into the sombre greys of northern poesy. Travellers, flocking northward in the middle ages, added to the stock, bringing subtle delicacies from Germany, and fervid tenderness from Italy. But much emanated from the north itself—from the storm-tost shores of Denmark,

and from the wild realm of the eternal snow and midnight sun. There were heroes and giants breasting the Dovre Fjord, as well as striding over the Adriatic. Certain shapes there were which loved the sea-surrounded little nation only. The Lindorm, hugest of serpents, crawled near Verona; but the Valrafn, or Raven of Battle, loved the swell and roar of the fierce north sea. The Dragon ranged as far south as Syria: but the Ocean-sprite liked cold waters, and flashed, icy-bearded, through the rack and cloud of storm. In the Scottish ballad we find the kelpie, but search in vain for the mermaid. In the Breton ballad we see the 'Korrigaun,' seated with wild eyes by the side of the wayside well; but hear little of the mountain-loving Trolds and Elves. It is in supernatural conceptions, indeed, in the creation of typical spirits to represent certain ever-present operations of nature, that the Danish ballads excel—being equalled in that respect only by the German Lieder, with which they have so very much in common. They seldom or never quite reach the rugged force of *language*,—shown in such Breton pieces as 'Jannedik Flamm' and the wild early battle-song. They are never so refinedly tender as the best Scottish pieces. We have to search in them in vain for the exquisite melody of the last portion of 'Fair Annie of Lochryan,' or for the pathetic and picturesque loveliness of 'Clerk Saunders,' in those exquisite lines *after the murder*:—

> Clerk Saunders he started, and Margaret she turn'd
> Into his arms, as asleep she lay;
> And sad and silent was the night
> That was between thir twae.

And they lay still, and sleepéd sound,
Until the day began to daw,
As kindly to him she did say,
'It's time, true love, ye were awa'!'

But he lay still and sleepéd sound,
Albeit the sun began to sheen;
She looked atween her and the wa',
And dull and drowsy were his een.

But they have a truth and force of their own which stamp them as genuine poetry. In the mass, they might be described as a rough compromise of language with painfully vivid imagination. Nothing can be finer than the stories they contain, or more dramatic than the situations these stories entail; but no attempt is made to polish the expression or refine the imagery. They give one an impression of intense earnestness, of a habit of mind at once reticent and shadowed with the strangest mysteries. That the teller believes heart and soul in the story he is going to relate, is again and again proved by his dashing, at the very beginning of his narrative, into the catastrophe:—

It was the young Herr Haagen,
He lost his sweet young life!

And all because he would not listen to the warnings of a mermaid, but deliberately cut her head off. There is no pausing, no description, such as would infer a doubt of the reality of any person in the story. The point is, not to convey the fact that sea-maidens exist—a truth of which every listener is aware—but to prove the folly

of disregarding their advice, when they warn us not to go to sea in bad weather.

The 'Kjœmpe Viser,' 'Stridssanger,' or Ballads of Battle, are a series of pieces describing the exploits of kings, heroes, and giants. It is impossible to fix the time at which the events are supposed to occur; but it seems to have been a period when the new faith was gathering strength in the north, but when Thor, the mighty of muscle, was still a power divinely noisy, and when echoes from the battle-grounds of Valhalla still reverberated through the lands of mountain, snow, and cloud. Whom the heroes represented, or whether they represented any real personages at all, is of less consequence than the assurance, which may be boldly given, that the traditions concerning them are as antique as the fragments preserved by Sœmund, or to be found in the Sagas. They may be divided into two groups, both mightier, stronger, wilder, than the men now living—the genuine giants and the mere warriors, men of ordinary dimensions. It may be noted that the warriors, when they come to blows with the giants, nearly always have the best of it; and the ballad of 'Berner Rise og Orm Ungersvend,' is both a case in point and an excellent sample of the style of the 'Kjœmpe Viser' generally. As this ballad is very long, we shall not quote it, but briefly tell its story.

The giant Berner was so big that he could with ease look over the battlements of any castle; but he was little-witted, irritable, never to be relied upon. 'It would have been unfortunate had he been suffered to remain

long in Denmark.' One day he buckled his sword to his side, and strode to the palace of the king. 'Hail, King of Denmark!' he cried. 'Either you shall give me your daughter, and share your land with me thereto, or we shall see which of your champions can meet me in the prize ring—*i Kredsen.*' The king refused point-blank the first propositions, and swore that one of his warriors should encounter the giant. 'Which of you brave Danish warriors,' exclaimed the king, passing into the hall where they were assembled, 'will fight this Berner, and receive my fair daughter and a share of my land as the reward of his bravery?' The knights sat still, and did not answer a word;—all but one. For Orm, called Ungersvend, who sat 'at the bottom of the board,' sprang over the table and manfully accepted the offer. Berner, peeping over the castle, heard Orm's mighty words. 'What little mouse is this that squeaks so boldly?' 'I am no mouse,' retaliated Orm; 'I am King Sigfrid's son—he who sleeps in the mountain.' Whereupon the giant observed, doubtingly, that if King Sigfrid was his father, Orm could be only fifteen years old; a fine fellow to fight with so doughty a giant, surely. But the brave youth was undaunted. 'Late in the evening, when the sun goes to rest,' he mounted horse to ride to his father's grave, his object being to procure the sword Birting, which lay by his father's side. He knocked on the mountain 'so hard, that it was a great wonder it did not fall with the blow.' The stones and earth rattled, and there was much noise. Sigfrid stirred and heard. 'May I not sleep in peace?'

he cried. 'Who wakes me so early? Let him beware lest he die by Birting!' 'I am Orm, thy youngest son, come to crave a boon.' 'Did I not give thee as much gold and silver as thou didst wish?' 'Yea!' replied Orm; 'but I value them not a penny. I want Birting; it is such a good sword.' 'Thou shalt not have Birting before thou hast been to Ireland, and avenged thy father's death.' 'Hand up Birting!' cried Orm, very angry! 'or I will knock the mountain into a thousand pieces!' This prevailed. 'Reach down thy hand, and take Birting from my side; but break not my grave, or woe will be thy portion.' That done, off went Orm, with 'Birting on his back.' On seeing him again, Berner began to hesitate, saying, 'It does not become a warrior to fight with a child.' But Orm attacked him, and they fought for three days, at the end of which Orm sliced off his opponent's lower limbs at the knees. 'Ugh!' cried Berner, yielding; 'it was unchampion-like to strike so low!' 'I was little and thou wert big,' returned Orm; 'I could not reach higher up!' Leaving Berner to his reflections, the victor took Birting on his back and walked to the sea-shore, and there beheld one Tord of Valland, also a giant, coming on land. 'Who is this little man?' demanded Tord. 'I am Orm Ungersvend, a champion bold and fine, and I have slain Berner, thine uncle.' 'If thou hast slain my dearest uncle, I slew the King of Ireland, thy father; and for that deed thou shalt not have a penny, or a penny's worth.' Then Orm raised Birting and struck off the head of Tord. First he slew Tord, and then all Tord's men. Lastly, hastening back

to the palace, he took the king's daughter by the hand. 'Beautiful maiden!' he exclaimed; 'thou art now mine, and I have gone through all the danger for thy sake.'

The above is not unlike our nursery legend of 'Jack the Giant Killer;' but it is told in good terse language, and the part where Orm visits his father's grave is really powerful. It is noticeable that what was once serious literal description, the expression of sincere belief, sounds to a modern ear very like dry humour—the portion, for example, where Orm lops off the champion by the knees. The name 'Mysseling' (little mouse), and the adjective 'böse' (angry), from their resemblance to the German words 'Mäuslein' and 'böse,' would seem to suggest a German original. But 'bös' is said still to be in use in Norway.

Perhaps the oldest of the battle ballads is the 'Tournament,' beginning

> It was a troop of gallant knights,
> They would a roving go,
> They have halted under Brattinborg,
> And pitched their tents below.
> 'Tis clatter, clatter, under hoof, when forth the heroes ride;

the last line being a kind of refrain to each stanza, to be found in all the Danish ballads, and generally having little or no connection with the theme.[1] This ballad

[1] These refrains doubtless belonged originally to pieces which they suited in significance and consistency, but in the course of transmission they have changed places. The refrain to 'Berner Rise' is

> 'But the groves stand all in blossom!'

—appropriate for some pæan or love poem.

has been known time out of mind in Denmark, and is interesting as giving a description of the shields and devices, as well as of the peculiar idiosyncrasies, of a long list of fighters. It ends with a single combat between Herr Humble and Sivard Snarensvend, which latter performs great feats with an oak tree, torn out of the ground to serve as a cudgel. There is a considerable resemblance between the 'Tournament' and some portions of the 'Vilkinasaga.'

'Berner Rise' and the 'Tournament' introduce us to many northern heroes. But the personages in many of the 'Kjœmpe Viser' are exclusively foreigners, belonging to the court of the Gothic King Diderik, or in some respect bound to him. King Diderik and his knights appear faintly and mistily in tradition; but surrounded by the silver haze of poetry, their figures stand out colossal, clear, and defined. 'How the Warriors of King Diderik fought in the Land of Birting' is a good ballad; but the best of all is the poem describing how Diderik and the Lion fought with the Serpent (*Lindorm*). Riding forth from Berne, one fine day, the king saw a lion and a serpent fighting, and after a battle of three days (the usual limit for combats in the 'Kjœmpe Viser'), the former was getting the worst of it. 'Help me, Herr King Diderik,' cried the quadruped. 'Help me, even for the sake of the golden lion which thou bearest on thy shield.' 'Long stood King Diderik, and thought thereupon'— though every minute was of consequence; but at last he drew his sword and attacked the serpent. He would have been victorious,

but unfortunately his sword broke off at the hilt. So the serpent 'took him upon her back and his horse under her tongue,' and crawled into her den in the mountain, where eleven young serpents were hungrily awaiting. She threw the horse to the babies, and tossed the man into a corner. 'Keep an eye on this little mouthful, this toothsome bit; I am going to sleep, and shall eat him when I awake.' So the wily lady went to sleep. Groping about the cave, Diderik found a sword, which he immediately recognised as Adelring, the property of King Sigfrid. 'God help thy soul, Sigfrid! I never guessed that thou hadst died thus.' Brandishing Adelring, he smote at the rocks, so that the mountain stood in flame. 'If thou wakest our mother,' screamed the little serpents, 'it will go ill with thee.' 'I will awaken your mother,' was the retort, 'and with a very cold dream; for Sigfrid's death shall be avenged upon you all.' The serpent awakened in alarm. 'What means all this noise?' she cried; whereupon Diderik explained his intent. In spite of her cowardice and imploring, she and all her young were slain. But serpent stings and tongues, scattered everywhere, prevented the hero from passing out. 'Curst be the lion!' he cried in his agony. 'The sneaking lion! had he not been graven on my shield, my horse would have borne me home.' The lion heard from without. 'Softly,' he cried; 'I am digging with my strong claw.' And he did so, while Diderik used his sword; till at last they made a clear channel out of the mountain. On passing forth, Diderik began to bemoan the loss of his horse;

but the lion interrupted him, crying, 'Mount my back, Master King Diderik, and I will bear thee home.' The ballad fitly ends :—

O'er the deep dale King Diderik rode,
And thro' green field and wood;
And lightly, merrily along
Went leaping the lion good.

King Diderik and the lion dwelt
Together evermoe,
Right well had one the other freed
From danger and much woe.

When Diderik in the greenwood rode,
By his side the lion sped,
And in his lap when still he sat,
The lion laid its head.

Wherefore was Diderik ever afterwards called the 'Knight of the Lion'—a title he had won with exceeding honour.

Thus are depicted, in somewhat startling colours, the manners and customs of a mythical period, familiar to us through the Sagas. The heroes sweep about, strong as the sword-blow, bright as the sword-flash. Echo babbles of wondrous things; every hill is haunted. But the tale-tellers talk like men dealing with *facts*, and are full of charming credulity. Not very different are the 'Historical Ballads,' so called, not because they are authentically historical, but because their heroes are historical personages. Beyond that, and the occasional mention of 'fatherland,' they have little to distinguish them from the other sets of 'Viser.' The northern

kings, from Oluf the Holy to Christian II., are the chief figures. We still find the supernatural element, besides plenty of fighting. King Waldemar flourishes a great sword, and a mermaid prophesies, soothsayer-like, to Queen Dagmar.

Among the pieces founded on popular superstition, appear many of the gems of Danish ballad literature. In nearly every one of them we hear of enchantment, of men and maidens transformed into strange shapes ; and it is remarkable that the worker of the foul witchcraft is invariably a cruel *stepmother*. The best of them are terse and strong, and impress us more solemnly than do the 'Battle Ballads.' We are in a strange region, as we read ;—and everywhere around us rises the wail of people who are doomed to visit the scenes of their humanity in unnatural forms.

> *In nova fert Animus mutatas dicere formas*
> *Corpora,*

might be the motto of any future translator of these pieces. How the Bear of Dalby turned out to be a king's son ; how Werner the Raven, through drinking the blood of a little child, changed into the fairest knight eye of man could see ; how an ugly serpent changed in the same way, and all by means of a pretty kiss from fair little Signe. But there are other kinds of supernatural manifestation. The Elves flit on 'Elfer-hill,' and slay the young men ; they dance in the grove by moonlight, and the daughter of the Elf-king sends Herr Oluf home, a dying man, to his bride. The ballad in

which the latter event occurs, bears, by the way, a striking resemblance to the Breton ballad of the 'Korrigaun.' The dead rise. A corpse accosts a horseman who is resting by a well, and makes him swear to avenge his death; and late at night, tormented by the sin of having robbed two fatherless bairns, rides a weary ghost, the refrain concerning whom has been adopted verbatim by Longfellow in his 'Saga of King Oluf':—

Dead rides Sir Morten of Foglesang!

The Trolds of the mountain besiege a peasant's house, and the least of them all insists on having the peasant's wife; but the catastrophe is a transformation—a prince's son. 'The Deceitful Merman' beguiles Marstig's daughter to her death, and the piece in which he does so is interesting as being the original of Goethe's 'Fisher.' Goethe found the poem translated in Herder's 'Volkslieder.' Another ballad, 'Agnete and the Merman,' begins—

On the high tower Agnete is pacing slow,
Sudden a Merman upsprings from below,
Ho! ho! ho!
A Merman upsprings from the water below.

'Agnete! Agnete!' he cries, 'wilt thou be my true-love—my all-dearest?' 'Yea, if thou takest me with thee to the bottom of the sea.' They dwell together eight years, and have seven sons. One day, Agnete, as she sits singing under the blue water, 'hears the clocks of England clang,' and straightway asks and receives permission to go on shore to church. She meets her mother

at the church-door. 'Where hast thou been these eight years, my daughter?' 'I have been at the bottom of the sea,' replies Agnete, 'and have seven sons by the Merman.' The Merman follows her into the church, and all the small images turn away their eyes from him. 'Hearken, Agnete! thy small bairns are crying for thee.' 'Let them cry as long as they will; I shall not return to them.' And the cruel one cannot be persuaded to go back. This pathetic outline, so capable of poetic treatment, forms the groundwork of one of the most musical and tender pieces in our language—Mr. Matthew Arnold's 'Forsaken Merman.' Indeed, the Danish mermen seem, with one or two exceptions, to have been good fellows, and badly used. One Rosmer Harmand does many kindly acts, but is rewarded with base ingratitude by everybody. The tale of Rosmer bears a close resemblance to the romance of Childe Rowland, quoted by Edgar in 'Lear.'

One of the best of the supernatural ballads is 'Aage and Elsie,' paraphrased by Oehlenschläger in 'Axel and Valborg,' and similar in subject to Bürger's 'Leonora.' We shall translate it entire, as an excellent specimen of its class:—

It was the young Herr Aage
  He rode in summer shade,
To pay his troth to Elsie lyle,
  The rosy little maid.

He paid his troth to Elsie,
  And sealed it with red, red gold,
But ere a month had come and gone
  He lay in kirkyard mould.

It was the little Elsie,
Her heart was clayey cold,
And young Herr Aage heard her moan
Where he lay in kirkyard mould.

Uprose the young Herr Aage,
Took coffin on his back,
And walked by night to Elsie's bower,
All thro' the forest black.

Then knock'd he with his coffin,
He knock'd and tirled the pin—
'Rise up, my bonnie Elsie lyle,
And let thy lover in!'

Then answered little Elsie,
'I open not the door,
Unless thou namest Mary's Son,
As thou could'st do before!'

'Stand up, my little Elsie,
And open thy chamber door,
For I have named sweet Mary's Son,
As I could do before!'

It is the little Elsie,
So worn, and pale, and thin,
She openeth the chamber-door
And lets the dead man in.

His dew-damp dripping ringlets
She kaims with kaim of gold,
And aye for every lock she curls
Lets fall a tear-drop cold.

'O listen, dear young Aage!
Listen, all-dearest mine!
How fares it with thee underground
In that dark grave of thine?'

*'Whenever thou art smiling,*
*When thy bosom gladly glows,*
*My grave in yonder dark kirkyard*
*Is hung with leaves of rose.*

*'Whenever thou art weeping,*
*And thy bosom aches full sore,*
*My grave in yonder dark kirkyard*
*Is filled with living gore.*

'Hark, the red cock is crowing,
And the dawn gleams chill and grey,
The dead are summoned back to the grave,
And I must haste away.

'Hark, the black cock is crowing,
'Twill soon be break of day—
The gate of heaven is opening,
And I must haste away!'

Upstood the pale Herr Aage,
His coffin on his back,
Wearily to the cold kirkyard
He walked thro' the forest black.

It was the little Elsie,
Her beads she sadly told—
She followed him thro' the forest black
Unto the kirkyard cold.

When they had passed the forest,
And gained the kirkyard cold,
The dead Herr Aage's golden locks
Were grey and damp with mould.

When they had passed the kirkyard,
And the kirk had enter'd in,
The young Herr Aage's rosy cheeks
Were ghastly pale and thin.

'O listen, little Elsie,
All-dearest, list to me!
O weep not for me any more,
For I slumber tranquillie.

'*Look up, my little Elsie,*
*Unto the lift so grey—*
*Look up unto the little stars,*
*The night is winging away.*'

*She raised her eyes to heaven*
*And the stars that glimmer'd o'er,—*
*Down sank the dead man to his grave—*
*She saw him nevermore.*

Home went little Elsie,
Her heart was chilly cold,
And ere a month had come and gone
She lay in kirkyard mould.[1]

The lines we have italicised seem to us at once tender and powerful, and the whole ballad is beautiful.

The resemblance of 'Aage and Elsie' to the Scottish ballad of 'Sweet William's Ghost' is apparent at a glance; and it also possesses some points in common with the old English ballad of the 'Suffolk Miracle.' One portion contains a form of expression common in the old Scottish ballads, as in 'Clerk Saunders,'—

Then up and crew the red, red cock,
And up and crew the grey.

Indeed, only a few illustrations out of hundreds, showing the resemblance between the Danish and our own

[1] See the author's 'Ballads of the Affections' (from the Scandinavian). Sampson, Low, and Co.

ballads, need be given here—since our purpose is not to build up any antiquarian theory, but to give a general and true impression of a somewhat neglected field of literature. 'Skjön Anna' (Beautiful Anna) is nearly the same as 'Lord Thomas and Fair Annie' in the 'Border Minstrelsy;' 'Stolt Ingeborg' as the 'Lady turned Sewing Man,' in Percy's 'Reliques;' and so on. The resemblance extends to the nicest points of language.

> King Frederick sidder paa Koldinghus,
> Med Ridder' og Svende drikker han godt Rus,

is nearly word for word with the opening of 'Sir Patrick Spens;'

> Han satte Hjaltet mod en Sten,
> Og Odden gjorde hans Hjerte Men,

is nothing more than the

> He set the sword's poynt to his brest,
> The pummill until a stone,

of Percy's 'Reliques.' Compare also with the conclusion of 'William and Margaret,' in the 'Reliques,' this conclusion of 'Herr Sallemand:'

> In the southern chancel they laid him down,
> In the northern laid his love,
> And out of each breast grew roses two,
> Their constancy to prove.
>
> Out of each breast, grew roses two,
> And the blossoms they were red, &c.

But comparisons may stop here.

We have left ourselves little room to write of the

large mass of romances and ballads, dealing with ordinary joys and sorrows consequent on the domestic affections. But to describe them in detail would far transcend our limits. Is it not enough that many of them are exquisite, and few of them disagreeable?—unless, indeed, the reader be a too fastidious person. In perusing *them*, indeed, we find ourselves again and again surprised at the recurrence of themes turning on seduction and illegitimacy—misfortunes and vices into which even kings and queens fall with dreadful frequency. It is not a nice subject to dwell upon, but he who is afraid of it must shut up old ballads for ever. We cannot get anything worse than the genuine version of the old Scottish ballad of 'Lamkin.' It must be confessed, moreover, that the themes are treated without pruriency, and that the frail ones are more unfortunate than sinful; for the seductions are nearly always caused by a lying troth on the part of the man, and the bastards grow up, and, sword in fist, *compel* their parents to make them honest children—as it seems they were able to do in those days and in those parts. The point of what might be styled immorality, we have said, is the one which first impresses us in reading the domestic pieces. But when we think of the changes which have taken place in manners and customs, and above all, when we contemplate the tender scenes of love, and joy, and sorrow which flower everywhere on our poetic vision—why, the immoral point seems so fine as to be hardly perceptible without green spectacles.

We think we have written enough to send the reader

to the old Danish ballads. Many of them have been rendered into German by Grimm, in his 'Altdänische Heldenlieder und Balladen;' and Jamieson has translated five in his 'National Ballads.' But we need a good collection of them in English, and get it we must sooner or later. The sooner the better.

## III.

### BJÖRNSON'S MASTERPIECE.

WHILE German literature darkens under the malignant star of Teutonism, while French Art, sickening of its long disease, crawls like a Leper through the light and wholesome world, while all over the European continent one wan influence or another asserts, its despair-engendering sway over books and men, whither shall a bewildered student fly for one deep breath of pure air and wholesome ozone? Goethe and Heine have sung their best—and worst. Alfred de Musset is dead, and Victor Hugo is turned politician. Grillparzer is still a mystery, thanks partly to the darkening medium of Carlyle's hostile criticism. From the ashes of Teutonic transcendentalism rises Wagner like a phœnix,—a bird too uncommon for ordinary comprehension, but to all intents and purposes an anomaly at best. One tires of anomalies, one sickens of politics, one shudders at the petticoat literature first created at Weimar; and looking east and west, ranging with a true invalid's hunger the literary horizon, one searches for something more natural, for some form of indigenous and unadorned loveliness, wherewith 'to fleet the time pleasantly, as

they did in the golden world.' That something may be found, without travelling very far. Turn northward, in the footsteps of Teufelsdrochk, traversing the great valleys of Scandinavia, and not halting until, like the philosopher, you look upon 'that slowly heaving Polar Ocean, over which in the utmost north the great Sun hangs low.' Quiet and peaceful lies Norway yet, as in the world's morning. The flocks of summer tourists alight upon her shores, and scatter themselves to their numberless stations, without disturbing the peaceful serenity of her social life. Towns are few and far between; railways scarcely exist. The government is a virtual democracy, such as would gladden the heart of Gambetta; the Swedish monarch's rule over Norway being merely titular. There are no hereditary nobles. There is no 'gag' on the press. Science and poetry alike flourish on this free soil. The science is grand as Nature herself, cosmic as well as microscopic. The poetry is fresh, light, and pellucid, worthy of the race, and altogether free from Parisian taint.

It is quite beyond our present purpose to attempt a sketch of modern Scandinavian poetry, interesting and useful as such a sketch would be. Our object is much simpler,—to treat of a single work by one of the most eminent of living Norwegian authors. A number of years ago, when we first began to interest ourselves in Scandinavian literature, we had the pleasure of introducing to public notice the works of a poet whose name has since then become tolerably familiar in this country as a writer of charming pastoral tales. The lovely idyls of

'Arne' and 'Övind' have of late years been rendered by more than one hand into English; and who that has read them can forget the wild little songs with which they are broken here and there—songs such as 'Ingerid Sletten of Willow Pool,' light as the gleam of sunrise on the mountains, and pure as the morning dew? But Björnson is something more than even the finest pastoral taleteller of this generation. He is a dramatist of extraordinary power. He does not possess the power of imaginative fancy shown by Wergeland (in such pieces as 'Jan van Huysums Blomsterstykke'), nor Welhaven's refinement of phrase, nor the wild melodious abandon of his greatest rival, the author of 'Peer Gynt;' but, to our thinking at least, he stands as a poet in a far higher rank than any of these writers. Many of his countrymen, however, prefer Ibsen.

Of the dramatic works from Björnson's pen with which we are familiar—'Mellem Slagene,' 'Halte Hulde,' 'Kong Sverre,' and 'Marie Stuart i Skotland'—one is of such extreme superiority that we propose to confine our attention, during the present article, to it alone. It has seemed to us that to give as briefly and as vividly as we can a sketch of the subject, with here and there a glimpse of the characters and the dialogue, will better than any amount of mere criticism enable the uninformed reader to gain a proper conception of Björnson's dramatic quality. A complete translation would doubtless be best, but that being neither expedient nor profitable to the translator, must be resigned to some more favoured mortal. The play in question is entitled 'Sigurd

Slembe;' it was published at Copenhagen in 1863;[1] and it is, besides being the masterpiece of its author, a drama of which any living European author might be justly proud.

'Sigurd Slembe,' or 'Sigurd the Bastard,' lived in Norway (according to the dramatist) in the stormy days of the twelfth century, when the kingdom was troubled with numberless petty dissensions, when every chieftain fought for his own hand, and every youth of spirit had the chance of ending his days as a petty king. The first part of the play—entitled 'Sigurd's First Flight'—opens in Stavanger Church, and as the scene begins, Sigurd enters, casts down his cap, and kneels at the altar, before the image of St. Olaf. 'Now shalt thou hearken, O holy Olaf!' he exclaims triumphantly. 'I have this day overthrown Bejntejn! Bejntejn was the strongest man in the country; and now—'tis I!' Then, after enumerating the advantages of such a championship, he adds, with delightful naïveté:—

> And for all this, I have myself to thank!
> Thou, Olaf, hast not helped me in the least.
> I bade thee tell me who my father was,
> But thou wert silent.

Therein lies the bitter wound of Sigurd's life. He is of mysterious birth, and the people style him base-born. When he would contest with young men of his age at leaping or wrestling, they call him opprobrious names, and bid him depart. He is shame-stricken at every

[1] 'Sigurd Slembe.' Af Björnsterne Björnson (Copenhagen, 1863).

step. And for all this, he thinks, Saint Olaf is to blame. All have kinsmen, save only he; yet he is the equal of any man. Only give him lineage and—ships, and he will force himself a kingdom somewhere or other, as the Knight Baldwin and many other similar adventurers had done before him! We have here, at the very beginning of the play, a perfect glimpse of the fierce, proud, untried temper, the simple manliness, and the wonderful physical strength of Sigurd. As the play advances, the leading figure grows imperceptibly upon our attention, until it seems to assume colossal proportions and to exercise an almost supernatural fascination.

Thora, the mother of Sigurd, enters the church, accompanied by a chieftain, Koll Sœbjörnson. These two chide him for facing the best champion in the land, aver that his pre-eminence will be attended with danger, and that, moreover, all he gets for his pains is, not the usual song of praise, but a nickname. 'Then name my father,' he cries, 'and the song will come!'

> *Thora.* Thy sire is Adelbrekt!
> *Sigurd.* I believe it not.
> He said in anger, that I was another's.
> *Thora.* In anger, yes!
> *Sigurd.* 'Tis *then* men speak the truth! . . .
> It matters not, since 'tis not infamy!
> *Thora.* But it *is* infamy.
> *Sigurd.* I am no Thrall;
> That I can feel; and thou art Saxé's daughter.
> *Thora.* Ah, there is other shame than slavish birth!

A stormy scene ensues. Thora pleads and pleads for

concealment. Sigurd still insists on knowing her secret, and at last, with fiery determination, threatens to quit home for the sea, and to bury his shame afar. This threat rends the mother's heart, and she confesses, with many tears and protestations, the terrible secret.

> My father from his threshold drave me forth
> With thee, who just wert born. My sister stood
> At the high casement, casting clothes to us,
> With shrieks and curses—and she died of sorrow.
> So now, thou know'st it; thou art basely born
> In blood-shame!
> Thy father, Sigurd, was my sister's husband!
> Was Norway's king,—he was King Magnus Barefoot!
> *Koll* (*rising*). King Magnus!
> *Thora.* Yea!
> *Sigurd* (*before Saint Olaf's image—with emphasis*):
> Then are we two aken!

Sigurd receives the intelligence with little or no surprise; albeit, as he expresses it, it 'opens the whole world to him.' A moment afterwards he is striding away, when Thora calls him back.

> Whither goest thou?
> *Sigurd.* To the King, my brother!
> For he shall straightway give me half the realm.
> *Thora.* O what a thought!
> *Koll.* Art thou in thy right reason?
> *Sigurd.* The King is basely born. His brother also,
> With whom he shared the realm, was basely born.
> And many Kings; for mark, St. Olaf's law
> Makes no distinctions. *I* too have the right
> To be a King.
> *Koll.* O softly, softly, friend!

*Sigurd.* Our patrimony shall be shared between us.
*Koll.* He who is powerful shares not willingly !
*Sigurd.* With Ejntejn shared he, and with Olaf also.
*Koll.* But he is aged now, and hath a son !

The scene, a very long one, proceeds with stormy power, Sigurd still insisting on seeing the King and in urging his birthright by fair means or by force; but at last the protestations of Koll and his mother deter him from plunging the country into civil war. 'My son,' exclaims Thora, 'remain here in peace;' but Sigurd cries wildly, 'Never! never!'

What, shall I begging stand at mine own board !
What, shall I waiting stand in mine own court !
Shall I the stirrup for my brother hold,
And stand aside, while he rides proudly forth
I' the hunt, and for dismissal his swift steed
Besprinkles me with mire? . . . O cursed thoughts !
Still whirling, like the dust-cloud round his helm—
They choke, they smother me,—I see them rise ! . . .
O mother, mother, wherefore did'st thou speak?

He hides his face and casts himself on the floor. At that moment the voices of Pilgrims are heard, singing within the Church:—

The earth is beauteous,
Beauteous is God's heaven,
Beauteous the Soul as it fares along;
Through the blessëd
Earthly kingdoms,
Go we to Paradise with song.[1]

[1] The original song is by Ingemann, and is rhymed or unrhymed as in the translation. It is impossible to reproduce in English its peculiar lyric charm.

The song comes to Sigurd like a voice from Heaven. Ever impulsive and ready to act on the inspiration of the moment, he springs up, crying, 'To Jerusalem!' He, too, taking the path whereby Tancred, Baldwin, and Robert came to glory, will go crusading to Palestine. Very striking here is Sigurd's mood, as an illustration of the purely business-like spirit which sent so many forth on pilgrimage. The Cross is a shelter for his indomitable pride, that is all; he has no delicate religious feeling.

> Hark, the Mass washes o'er the church's walls,
> The Bishop at the altar lifts the Host,
> The Priests hold forth the consecrated Cross!

Sigurd rushes forth to join them, leaving Thora in piteous lamentation,—for her child, she dreams, is lost to her for ever. A short scene ensues; and then we again catch sight of Sigurd, standing on a height near the sea, while the Pilgrim-ships lie in a bight below, ready to hoist sail. The man's heart is full of wild exultation. He has the command of a ship, he is about to sail away, and now for the first time he lives indeed. Sadly the mother enters. He runs to her, garrulously expressing his delight.

> Look at the dawn which shines around us—see!
> With colours clear it paints my leave-taking,
> And giveth promise of a glorious day.
> What fragrance sheddeth here the morning weather,
> How fresh the lift[1] is and how high the heaven,

[1] *Luft* in the original; whence, indeed, the exquisite word so common in our own ballads.

And never do I mind me of a day
When I could see so far out on the Deep!
The breeze which blows thro' all and strikes my cheek
So softly, saith it not into mine ear,
From air, from sea, from dawn, from the sweet weather:
Luck to thy journey, Sigurd Magnusson!

It is clear enough that no mere domestic affection could fetter a soul like this. Sigurd has a boy's heart, is full of headstrong and sanguine spirit. He kisses her and departs, leaving her seated on the rock, weeping. Here the curtain falls on Sigurd's First Flight.

There is a lapse of five years. The curtain rises on another scene: Katanoes (or Caithness) in Scotland. A change takes place in the form of the dialogue. The opening act is written in blank verse, not much more polished than that of our translation; but all the following scenes are in prose—that strong simple Prose, full of short natural sentences, which Björnson wields with such effect in his tales, and which here, as elsewhere, is much more effective than Verse of any kind.

Two women are seated in a lofty hall, sewing, and hearkening to the roar of a storm. One is Helga, mother to Harald, Earl of Caithness, 'also (as the list of characters explains) Earl of a portion of the Orkneys, but driven out from the latter possessions by his Co-regent and brother.' The other is Frakark, aunt of Harald and sister of Helga: an evil woman, as will be seen in the sequel. Frakark is at work on a red shirt or jerkin, embroidered with gold and gems. 'To-day,' says Helga, in the pause of the wind; 'to-day, Svenn

Viking comes from Orkney.' 'What tidings,' asks Frakark, 'dost thou think he will bring?' 'No good,' answers Helga. The scene continues :—

*Helga.* It is this day nigh three years since we were forth-driven . . . We have no one to help us!

*Frakark.* Daily the Vikings are coming home from their summer cruise. With so many brave men something could be carried out.

*Helga.* But they have no leader!

*Frakark.* A word in thine ear: during the last few days I have bethought me of one. (*The sisters look at each other.*) What cravest thou in a leader?

*Helga.* High birth.

*Frakark.* That I think he hath.

*Helga.* He must be a stranger.

*Frakark.* Wherefore?

*Helga.* A leader with full power might be dangerous; he must therefore stand free, without kinsmen, without friends.

*Frakark.* So stands he, and so did I think.

*Helga.* Hast thou moreover the means whereby we can win him to us?

*Frakark.* There is only one bond which holds fast—gain!

*Helga.* He could gain more by treachery; for Earl Paul hath more treasure than Harald.

*Frakark.* Knowest thou any other means?

*Helga.* That do I.—But knowest thou the Man?

*Frakark.* What thinkest thou of the Man who came here fourteen days ago?

*Helga.* From Scotland?

*Frakark.* Yes.

*Helga.* Good.

*Frakark.* Him mean I!

*Helga.* I have thought the same since the first day I saw him; but I would not be the first to say so. (*Rises.*)

*Frakark* (*also rising*). What sign did'st thou take, Helga?
*Helga.* I have never before been so afraid of any man!

We know by instinct that they are speaking of Sigurd. After proceeding to describe his proud bearing and solitary ways, they determine that he is a man of high birth, worth winning, and Frakark proposes to sound him forthwith. Here Helga interferes with an objection —that they must first consult her son the Earl. At this moment an old retainer enters with startling intelligence. 'Your niece Audhild is still abroad. . . . She went out yesterday; a day has now passed. Despite the storm hath she not come home; her maidens dared say nought, but waited; old Kaare has since gone forth with many men, but she is not found.' In the midst of the piteous exclamations to which the news gives rise, Audhild herself appears. Her entrance is characteristic. She walks in silently, and to all the questions of her mother and aunt, answers in monosyllables. 'Where hast thou been?' 'Out.' 'Where didst thou sleep last night?' 'I did not sleep.' They warn her eagerly against the danger of so exposing herself to the attacks of the wild Vikings who overrun the country. But she smiles, and holds up a little knife with a picture of the Holy Virgin on the blade. 'She can win the stranger,' cries Helga to Frakark, and the two women proceed forthwith to sound the girl's feelings. We are not long left in doubt that Audhild has already admired the stranger from a distance.

After a short scene between Helga and Frakark, in

which we have still darker glimpses of the character of the latter, Earl Harald enters, accompanied by a boy, Svenn Aslejvsson, who is his invariable companion. The character of Harald is singularly original, though in one or two of its touches it reminds us of Hamlet. A big, simple-hearted, peace-loving man, sick of the machinations for ever weaving around him, preferring the light prattle of Svenn and the barking of his hounds to the company of men; such is Harald the Earl. He appears characteristically; sending first Svenn to peep and ascertain if the two women are gone, and then entering with one loathing look at the retreating figure of Frakark. He compares his aunt to a captive wolf, and Svenn vows the resemblance would be perfect if the wolf 'had a head-dress on.' From childhood upwards, he has ever found the counsels of that woman to be fraught with evil. They have corrupted the heart of his mother, alienated him from his brother, plunged his people again and again into wretched intestine broils. He would *kill* her, if he could, he thinks; and he listens darkly while Svenn details the various means of killing and torturing 'the wolf' they have captured, for the beast is to him an image of the evil woman. The scene proceeds:—

*Harald.* What is that? Is it the storm?

*Svenn.* No, it is shouting. (*Climbs up to the window.*) It is Svenn Viking with all his men! Now he is come!

*Harald.* That's it! The stranger has his place at bed and board—there will be blows at the court, Svenn.

*Svenn.* Who'll win, think you?

*Harald.* Svenn Viking will win. I cannot bear the stranger; —and thou?

*Svenn.* I hate all here.

*Harald.* Well, let them both be slain, and we shall be quit of both . . . Lovest thou Svenn Viking?

*Svenn.* Nay, nay!

*Harald.* Nor I either . . . O Svenn, if I dared!

*Svenn.* What would'st thou do?

*Harald.* Never mind. But one thing methinks I shall dare to do, if this lasts long.

*Svenn.* What is that?

*Harald.* Die!

*Svenn.* But,—dear Jarl!

*Harald* (*seated*). Tell me of Sigurd Jorsalfarer!

*Svenn.* For ever harping on *him!*

*Harald.* He is a great leader, Svenn.

*Svenn.* He *was;* but now he is mad.

*Harald.* By what means, thinkest thou, grew he mad?

*Svenn.* There came a Fish to him in the bathing tub.

*Harald.* Hm, hm!—Know'st thou what Fish it was?

*Svenn.* Fish?

*Harald.* 'Tis an evil thought, through which one cannot sleep.

*Svenn.* Think no more of that, Jarl. Let us do something else—let us sing.

*Harald.* Yes, little Svenn, let us sing.

*Svenn.* Of the king without land and queen, &c. . . . Jarl, there comes thy mother.

*Harald.* So!—I shall find peace no longer!

Helga enters, and is received by her son much in the mood of Hamlet the Dane. She shows him a fair cap she has been embroidering for him, and while taking it, he remarks that it would look well on a dead head.

Their interview is very long and very sad. Harald finally demands to know why his mother has sought him, for he has come to associate her presence with some secret influence of his aunt. 'He asks only one little thing—to be left in peace!' She informs him that Svenn Viking has arrived with a message from his brother the Earl, and that he must hear and answer it. He is at first angry. '*I* sent no message to my brother; I have done nothing, I will hear nothing.' But he yields as usual, and forthwith Svenn Viking appears, accompanied by Frakark. 'Too many wolves to one hound!' mutters the Jarl, seated; while the boy Svenn nestles on a footstool at his feet.

Svenn Viking delivers his message with little ceremony. It proposes a meeting between the two brothers, for the adjustment of all quarrels; and it adds one strong condition, — that Harald must come to the meeting alone, without his mother or his aunt. Frakark storms and Helga pleads, to Harald's pain and astonishment. 'Was Thorkel Fóstre at hand,' asks Frakark, sneeringly, 'when Paul gave this answer?' 'From Thorkel it came,' replies Svenn; adding, 'He said that Frakark and Helga had for twenty years kept the Orkneys in broil; that through them the Earl's father had striven after the single dominion, and slain Magnus, Thorkel Fostre's kinsman; that they, and only they, now kept the brothers asunder, for their only thought was to place the whole sway in the hands of the one.' Frakark's comment is ominous—'So long as Thorkel Fostre lives, there will be no peace.'

Svenn Viking, having delivered his message, now touches on his own private concerns, and protests that, during his absence as ambassador, the head place at court, usually occupied by him, has been given to a stranger; and he strides forth to adjust the matter in the way best known to men in that stormy period. His meeting with Sigurd takes place without, but is witnessed from the stage. 'The stranger springs in on him like a cat, throws himself down with him, himself under, and with legs and hands against his breast, whips him over his head, many yards away,—then springs up himself, draws his sword, and holds it at his throat.' The enthusiasm is great. 'Audhild,' says Frakark, to her niece, 'go forth and call him in;' adding to Helga, 'This man was born for a leader; now shall Earl Paul get his answer.' Meantime, some striking by-play is going on between Earl Harald and the boy. 'Svenn, fetch the chess-board. Let us play the game where the kings stand still, and the women take the lead.'

Sigurd enters. Frakark and Helga question him of his birth and antecedents, and offer him the leadership. He is reticent, but his very reticence strengthens the impression. This scene is in the highest degree dramatic; the 'asides' of Harald and Svenn, as they play at chess, forming a strange comment on the main dialogue. 'Now am I sold, little Svenn!' The Earl rises to go, when they are about to call in the people. 'Say I am *sick;* thou wilt not be so far from the truth!' and accompanied by his little companion, he gloomily retires. It is to be remarked that Helga throughout is

anxious not to ignore the wishes of her son, but is constantly over-ruled by the headstrong spirit of Frakark. Before the scene ends, Sigurd shows a letter from David King of Scotland, recommending him to the leadership. 'Why hast thou not given us this before?' asks Frakark; and Sigurd's reply is characteristic: 'I wished first to know all here—that was not done in a day.'

The first Act of 'Sigurd's Second Flight' ends with a striking tableau. Frakark, in a brief speech, recommends Sigurd to the rude mob of warriors, and they receive him enthusiastically,—even the discomfited Svenn Viking casting in his vote with the rest. 'Many here,' cries an old warrior, 'have in former days followed the noble chief Magnus Barefoot. Him thou resemblest, as one drop of water resembles another, and therefore do we long to follow thee.' Another old man exclaims, 'Aye! he resembles him who bore the wolf on his red jerkin;' and the men assembled add in chorus, 'He is a son of Magnus!'

The second Act opens in Orkney, and finds Sigurd Slembe and Svenn Viking on excellent terms together. Thorkel Fostre has been murdered by the instrumentality of Frakark, and the great heart of Sigurd sickens at such treachery. 'I will straightway depart!' cries the Norseman. 'Remain, rather, and take thy land,' returns Svenn; adding, that the Orkneys properly belong to Norway, and are the fitting home of Magnus Barefoot's son. Sigurd indignantly refuses. We have speedily a fine scene between Sigurd and Audhild. The leader has a slight flesh-wound, and the maiden binds and

dresses it. Sigurd apprises her of the murder of Thorkel, and expresses his intention of deserting a cause stained by so foul a crime. Audhild pleads for her kindred,—for Helga and for Harald, who is very sick. Sigurd hesitates, and strides forth to commune with his men. Next, in a wild dialogue, Frakark avows to Helga her responsibility for Thorkel's assassination; but is interrupted by Audhild, who enters wildly, crying: 'Helga, Helga, take Harald and fly—the men will not long serve thee—some will to Earl Paul, others will follow Sigurd. . . . . When Sigurd entered, they received him as a king. . . . the monks shrieked of fratricide and Hell,—and many cried, Svenn Viking loudest of all, that Sigurd must take the lead!' 'My son! my son!' shrieks Helga, affrighted. Immediately thereupon, Sigurd's voice is heard without. 'Ye who watch by the fjörd, mark each sail that comes; ye who stand by the door, let none through, out or in, without my bidding.' He enters fiercely, facing the women. Sigurd insists on an immediate treaty of peace being concluded with Earl Paul, whose ships are at hand. 'Hast thou the heart to forget him who sitteth sick in his chamber?' asks the mother; but Sigurd retorts briefly, 'Ye have done evil enough!' He goes to the table to write out the treaty, but suddenly remembering his wounded hand, cries to Audhild, 'You must help me!' 'I?' exclaims the maiden; 'I have only been used to write for myself.' 'Her handwriting is not good enough to be used,' says Frakark; but Sigurd, aware of Frakark's own deficiency in that respect, retorts: 'Of that one is no fit judge who

is herself unable to read!' He orders the elder women to withdraw, and is left alone with Audhild. Audhild sits down to write.

*Sigurd.* 'In the holy Trinity's name we make the following pact, which we desire to have ratified by the Norse King.'

*Audhild.* The Norse King?

*Sigurd.* The feudal pact must be sworn again; therein lies the only safety. [*Audhild writes.*

*Sigurd* (*aside*). But do not these two brethren love each other? I must prove, what the women have ne'er proved; and they have hardly proved *that!*

*Audhild.* 'The Norse King?'

*Sigurd.* 'We will rule the Isles together, and dwell together in our freehold—with one power.'

*Audhild* (*half rising*). Together, and with one power?

*Sigurd.* Apart, they have ever been unlucky. (*Audhild looks at him, writes; he continues aside:*) But they who only prompt evil must begone,—yea *she* must begone.

*Audhild.* 'With one power.'

*Sigurd.* 'All who had share in Thorkel Fostre's death are banished the Isles for ever.'

*Audhild.* And Frakark?

*Sigurd.* Aye; 'tis she I mean (*Audhild writes*). But the mother may remain. She must be wiser now. (*Pause.*)

*Audhild.*—'for ever.' No, no, you must not see!

*Sigurd.* Indeed, I must see!

*Audhild.* But remember, I have hitherto only written for myself.

*Sigurd.* Clear and free. Add now: 'Sigurd of Norway, surnamed the Bastard, is banished the Isles for ever.'

*Audhild.* Jesus! but wherefore?

*Sigurd.* Both Earls wish it. Without this condition they have no faith in the pact.

Sigurd is struggling between two feelings—love and duty. Aware that the supreme power is his if he likes to take it, he has nevertheless determined to depart—as before, with the pilgrims to Jerusalem. After Audhild has written so far, he falls into a brown study, listening to a still small voice which bids him seize the earldom.

*Audhild.* I am ready.

[*Sigurd looks at the paper and puts his finger on it.*

*Audhild.* Have I forgot anything?

*Sigurd.* Yea—'surnamed the Bastard;' but since you have forgotten it, it shall *not* be written down.

Sigurd still reiterating his determination to leave the Orkneys, Audhild offers him as a souvenir the little dagger her father brought from Jerusalem. 'And so may God go with thee,' she says, moving away.

*Sigurd.* Are you going?

*Audhild.* Yes . . .

*Sigurd.* But not directly?

*Audhild.* There is no more to say.

*Sigurd.* But after all we have scarce spoken to each other?

*Audhild.* 'Tis best, I think, we should not speak together any more.

*Sigurd.* What did you say?

*Audhild.* Nothing. (*Going.*)

*Sigurd.* Audhild!

*Audhild.* Farewell!

*Sigurd.* Audhild!

*Audhild.* Sigurd! (*She leaps two steps towards him, and flings her arms around his neck; then, as if recovering from stupor*) What have I done?

*Sigurd.* I know not; but I have become in one moment blesseder than I thought possible in life.

*Audhild.* You must depart.
*Sigurd.* Not *now!*
*Audhild.* Your brother pilgrims?
*Sigurd.* I know them not.
*Audhild.* Your plans?
*Sigurd.* I remember them not.
*Audhild.* God in heaven, then I am happy! (*Embrace.*)
*Sigurd.* Audhild!
*Audhild.* Sigurd!
*Sigurd.* Once more, Audhild.
*Audhild.* Sigurd!—Heavenly powers, thou lovest me!
*Sigurd.* Look at me!
*Audhild.* I do naught else.
*Sigurd.* Thou art weeping.
*Audhild.* I cannot help it.
*Sigurd.* Let me kiss thee!
*Audhild.* Yea! (*He kisses her.*)
*Sigurd.* Can this end?
*Audhild.* Nay; while I clasp thee.
*Sigurd.* Then loosen thy hair, and bind me.
*Audhild.* Is it, then, thee I clasp?
*Sigurd.* O yea!
*Audhild.* And is it true, thou lovest me?
*Sigurd.* As that I think!
*Audhild.* 'Tis almost too much to believe. (*They embrace.*)

Helga enters, and demands the document. Casting her eye over it, she perceives the stipulation for Frakark's banishment, but Sigurd insists that it shall be signed as it stands. At this moment the dark side of his nature appears, and his face is stormy enough to startle his beloved. 'Who art thou, Sigurd?' asks Audhild, when Helga has withdrawn to get her son's signature. 'One who forgets who he is.' 'Hast thou committed any

crime?' 'Nay; but ask not.' 'Hast thou ever loved any one before?' 'Never.' 'How didst thou come, then, to love *me?*' 'In one moment, I think—yea, I know not; but thou me?' 'From the moment I saw thee; and now I can say to thee thus much—hadst thou departed, I should have died.' She adds, after a moment: 'Thou must be the son of some mighty man!'

*Sigurd.* Audhild!

*Audhild.* What is it?

*Sigurd.* For our future peace: speak so no more!

*Audhild.* God!

*Sigurd.* Not that look, Audhild! . . . It asks ever: Who art thou, Sigurd?

*Audhild.* Then do not look at me. (*She hides her face in his breast.*)

*Helga* (*entering from her son's chamber*). Thou must be a wizard, stranger! What hath never gladden'd me for three long years, thou hast achieved; he rose up and sang! When he came to the part about Frakark, he laughed, and called to his boy. Here is his signature—see, what great letters!

The evil Frakark now enters, and, apprised of the arrangement, laughs mockingly. But now arises a new complication. Bound thus by a new tie to the soil, Sigurd hesitates to carry out his plans for the reconciliation of the brothers, and again longs to seize the earldom. He offers to tear the treaty in twain. A stormy scene ensues; but Audhild herself intervenes, and Sigurd hands her the paper. The act concludes:—

*Helga.* All angels be praised! It must be straightway sent. It is the only way.

*Frakark.* There is one way more.

*Helga.* Tempt me not. Earl Paul shall come.

*Frakark* (*whispering*). But *when* he comes . . . then shall we give to him the garment at which I have been sewing these three years.

*Helga.* Peace! (*She goes.*)

*Audhild.* Sigurd, whither shall we depart?

*Sigurd.* Meet me here each morning, ere the others are arisen.

*Audhild.* Shall we not depart, then?

*Sigurd.* I will tell thee, when Earl Paul comes.

The third and concluding act of 'Sigurd's Second Flight' opens with a fine ballad, descriptive of an incident in the early life of Helga, sung by an old warrior and a chorus of men, who are on the look-out for Earl Paul's ships. Then enter Harald the Earl and his boy Svenn. The scene which follows is touching in the extreme, but too long to quote. The poor, sickly, weary Earl, foreseeing still further peril and horror in the secret counsels of his mother and aunt, has made up his mind to die, and he communicates his intention to Svenn figuratively, merely saying that he is going on a long journey. 'Then I will go with thee,' exclaims the boy. 'Whither I go no one can follow.' He is going, he says, over the great water; the sea-mist will swallow him up. 'Will thy dogs follow thee?' asks Svenn. 'Nay; thou shalt take care of them; they howled last night;—O thou must be kind to them!' He bids the boy not to weep, for he will visit him 'in the night in his dreams.' The interview between these two simple creatures is full of the finest pathos; nothing can be tenderer or more true to human nature.

Following the above is an exquisite scene between the lovers, Sigurd and Audhild. Sigurd is troubled and distraught, still with his eye on the Earldom. To them comes Svenn Viking. It is understood that at a given sign the brothers are to be taken prisoners.

*Svenn.* Frakark tried again last night to send a message to Caithness. (*Smiles.*)

*Sigurd* (*smiling*). So!

*Svenn.* But he to whom she gave the money, drank it up! (*Laughs.*)

*Sigurd* (*laughing also*). So!

*Svenn.* The Pilgrims weigh anchor this day . . . they believe thou wilt sail with them. (*Laughs.*)

*Sigurd* (*laughing also*). So!

The significance of this is unmistakable. Sigurd has listened to the solicitations of Svenn Viking and the others, and means, as the son of Magnus Barefoot, to take possession of the Orkneys, in defiance of the rights of Harald and Paul. But he is not altogether decided. 'I will down to the Pilgrim-ships,' he says to himself, 'for it is still possible that I may depart.' The stage is clear, and the sisters enter, Frakark bearing the shirt, or tunic, on which she has been so long at work; Helga a diabolic salve with which the interior of the garment is to be smeared. 'The shirt is tempting to see, bright with gold and gems; he will instantly put it on;' and the significant stage direction follows—'They rub on the unguent with a cloth, and they hold it with a cloth.' The poisoned garment is to be offered to Earl Paul, and if worn must instantly prove fatal. Already trembling

at the prospect of punishment, Helga vows to build a new Chapel instead of the old one, which is damaged, and Frakark suggests that, when all is done, Harald shall go on pilgrimage, to expiate his own sins and theirs!

While they are thus engaged, Harald, 'in light morning attire,' enters from his chamber. His eye falls upon the shirt; and he is already forewarned of the hideous purpose for which it is destined. 'It has taken three years in the making,' observes Frakark. 'Three years,' replies the Earl; 'much good may be done in three years. How long walked Jesus the Christ about with his disciples? Charles the Great did much in three years. Olaf the Holy baptized all southern Norway. . . . And in three years *I* have done nothing; and you have made this shirt.' He offers to take it, but the women resist. 'Hark to my hounds, how they are howling, poor beasts!' he cries; 'give me the shirt.' They warn him, but in vain.

*Helga.* It will cost thee thy life.

*Harald.* Life, mother, life! Three years' work invite to one hour's dance;—Paul shall look on from his ship.

*Both.* What saith he?

*Harald.* Never, that I remember, have I asked thee for aught; but now I ask thee for this shirt. I have conceived a liking to it, as smoke to the breast of the blue, the autumn leaves to the earth, the gloaming dew to the sea, or a wounded hart to a hiding-place.

*Frakark.* Is this madness?

*Harald.* I hunger for this shirt. 'Tis not its colour, for that reminds me of blood; nor its pearls, for they speak to me of

the treacherous sea ; nor its gold,—that reminds me of Hell-fire.

He snatches the shirt despite their entreaties, springs with it into his chamber, and bolts the door. In vain the distracted women shriek to him that the garment is poisoned. In vain Helga invokes curses on the head of Frakark, who has urged her to the diabolical plan of murder. It is too late. Harald enters again, clad in the poisoned dress, and, shrieking with pain, he falls. 'Call Svenn!' he shrieks ; 'it burns, it blisters, it rends. O! O! give me water!' The boy Svenn enters, and, with a cry of pain, rushes to his lord's assistance.

*Harald.* Svenn, mind my hounds.
*Svenn.* Yes.
*Harald.* And bid my brother to have mass read for me.
*Svenn.* Yes.
*Harald.* Now all changes . . . Is it thou, standing there?
*Helga.* No, it is *I.*
*Harald.* Is it thou?
*Helga.* O look this way!
*Harald.* I see thee not.
*Helga.* Here am I—here. Can'st thou forgive me?
*Harald.* Who holds my head?
*Svenn.* It is I—Svenn.
*Harald.* Is it Svenn? . . . Where art thou, mother?
*Helga.* I am holding thy hand.
*Harald.* Beware of the shirt, mother!
*Helga.* No, Harald, I will die with thee.
*Harald.* Now, for the first time, thou hast understood me, mother. Where are thou?
*Helga.* It is I who am kissing thee.

*Harald.* But how light it grows . . . Is it thou who art white?

*Helga.* Naught here is white.

*Harald.* Aye, here is something . . . Lay me down. (*It is done.*) Mother, where art thou? (*She flings herself upon him.*)

*Svenn* (*rising*). Now he is dead.

Sigurd and others enter. Svenn Viking whispers with a grim smile, '*One* brother is out of the way;' but the Norseman, shocked beyond measure, vows that the survivor shall be left in peace. They bear the dead body from the stage, followed by Helga. 'Frakark!' moans the mother, as she passes, 'the house thou would'st have built for us hath sunken into ruin over our heads. . . . . Thou shalt survive thy schemes. God have mercy on thine old age!'

*Sigurd* (*to the boy Svenn*). And thou, little friend, where wilt thou go?

*Svenn.* I, too, will follow, till he is buried.

*Sigurd.* And then?

*Svenn.* I will take his hounds, and hie home.

*Sigurd.* Thou hast been a faithful servant . . . Is not that thy knife?

*Svenn.* Yes. (*He takes it, glances at it, looks significantly at Frakark, and goes.*)

*Sigurd* (*to her*). There grows thy Doomsman!

*Frakark.* Hast thou aught more to say to me?

*Sigurd.* Nay.

*Frakark.* Then remain alone. (*He goes.*)

*Sigurd.* So I am alone . . . in this house . . . among curses and the moans of broken plans . . . face to face with mine own . . . The Stillness behind me, glaring upon me like an evil eye . . . All I look on sinks down in it; here is only

eternity, eternity! . . . O, there is a roar over me as of the clashing of the wings of a great host; for *He* is here, the great, the wrathful God.

His mind is made up. He will never again lust for power; and if he cannot serve others, he will at least serve God the Lord. To that end he will quit these evil shores, sailing with the Pilgrims in their holy quest southward. But the voice of Audhild breaks in upon his ear. 'O, what a woeful house! Where art thou, Sigurd?—Sigurd, where art thou?' And she springs in to his side.

*Audhild.* What hath happened? Helga lies dead on her son's corse; all doors are open, strangers burst in, Earl Paul comes, Frakark flies forth,—where have I peace but with thee, thou eternally beloved one!

*Sigurd.* Then thou seekest it with a fugitive!

*Audhild.* Take me with thee!

*Sigurd.* A huswife is for peace and home. I have no remaining place.

*Audhild.* Thou forsakest me?

*Sigurd.* Mourning hath broken in upon our feast day; the house must be cleansed; now flies each to his own.

*Audhild.* Then what I feared hath come!—What shall become of me? (*Sinks on her knees and covers her face.*)

*Sigurd* (*approaching her*). Ask, rather, what thou hast found in me?

*Audhild* (*giving him both hands*). Good fortune, the only good fortune I have ever known!

*Sigurd.* Trouble and fear, one hour's happiness, another's tears.

*Audhild.* Who art thou, Sigurd, that I have never felt myself sure of thee?

*Sigurd.* Magnus Barefoot's son, heir to Norway.

*Audhild* (*moving away in subdued pain*). Then should'st thou never have spoken to me !

*Sigurd.* I had found no peace in all the world ; wherefore, when thou did'st offer it me, it was sweet to find.

*Audhild.* You took mine, and thyself found none.

*Sigurd.* Child, what evil have I done thee ?

The scene continues very touchingly. Sigurd tells of his intention to depart, and she sadly acquiesces. As he gives to her a ring Magnus Barefoot gave to his mother, she flings her arms round his neck, crying, 'Say to me that I am the only one thou hast ever loved.'

*Sigurd.* I will tell thee more . . . thro' my life I can never love another.

*Audhild.* Then I will think of thee as of my dear husband, who is away upon a journey.

*Sigurd.* But thou must not hide from thyself that he can never return.

*Audhild.* No ; for he follows the great band, which I, too, will try to join.

VOICES FROM THE SEA.

The earth is happy,
Happy is God's heaven,
Happy the Soul as it fares along ;
Thro' the blessëd
Earthly kingdoms,
March we to Paradise with song.

*Sigurd.* Hearest thou the Pilgrims' Song ? A second time it lifts me above dream and doubt, but higher than before. These sounds, streaming thro' the lift as angels with white robes, O let them be our highest Bridal-Song ! Audhild, fare-

well! (*They embrace, she hears him once.*) Yes, I come—I come. [*Exit.*

*Audhild.* Lord, follow him. (*Kneeling.*) But stay also with me!

Thus ends this remarkable drama, the second of the series of which Sigurd is the hero. Difficult as it is to do justice to art so delicate, especially when the artist works with such fragile tools as the strange monosyllabic unrhythmic dialogue of Björnson; and hastily as we have been compelled to render passages which absolutely swarm with colloquial idioms very difficult to translate into our more formal speech, still the great merits of the play will be apparent. The dialogue is often tedious, and at times almost irrelevant; there is no attempt at fine writing or forced antithesis; there are few images and no fancies; but the effect of the whole is of vivid and striking reality. The verisimilitude is perfect. In more than one respect, particularly in the loose, disjointed structure of the piece, 'Sigurd Slembe' reminds one of Goethe's 'Götz,' but it deals with materials far harder to assimilate, and is on the whole the finer picture of romantic manners. Audhild, indeed, is a creation worthy of Goethe at his best; worthy, in our opinion, to rank with Clärchen, Marguerite, and Mignon, as a masterpiece of delicate characterisation. And here we may observe, incidentally, that Björnson excels in his pictures of delicate feminine types,—a proof, if proof were wanting, that he is worthy to take rank with the highest class of poetic creators. No other Norseman, certainly not Oehlenschläger, has produced one such

character as Audhild in 'Sigurd Slembe,' Eli in 'Arne,' and little Inga, in 'King Sverre.'

Time and space forbid us to describe the concluding play of the trilogy,—'Sigurd's Home-coming.' In some respects it is the finest of the three. The picture of a rude Norwegian court in the twelfth century, presided over by a drunken and weakminded king, surrounded by savage councillors, is drawn to the life. Sigurd once more seeks to grasp his own, and sorrow is again his portion. Lastly, worn out, deserted, miserable, we find him pillowing his head on the breast of his mother, who is now clad in the dark weeds of a nun. There is one exquisite scene between Sigurd and a Finn-maiden, which we should gladly have translated had it been possible. But we abandon the task now, in the hope that what we have said may induce some abler hand than ours to translate 'Sigurd Slembe' in its entirety. It will have to be done as a labour of love, for the intelligent public of England will neither learn foreign languages nor read 'translations.' If, however, either Mr. Morris or Mr. Magnusson, or both together, were to do this labour (an easy task after their excellent rendering of Grettir's huge Saga), many true students would, we are sure, be grateful. For our own part, we seem to see in Björnsterne Björnson a writer whose reputation in this country will yet rise very high indeed, as one of the noble company of modern 'masters.'

## IV.

### DANISH ROMANCES.[1]

MODERN Danish literature is as pure and simple as Danish character and manners. With a few, a very few disagreeable exceptions, it contains nothing very exciting—nothing which in England is denominated sensation. The Danes do not care for startling incidents; they like domestic details and pretty *genre* grouping. Their novels, for the most part, are very much of the same tone as the well-known pictures of Swedish manners, drawn by Frederika Bremer; but in Andersen and others there is a freshness and a delicacy unattainable by the Swedish lady. Their stories are pleasant compact little bits of writing, covered with a soft silken prettiness, which, like the down on the wings of a butterfly, comes off if pressed too rudely. So in their poetry. Milder national songs were never written; less eventful ballad verse is scarcely possible. If two lovers join hands and walk up a hill, and then walk down again, it is quite enough for the Danish minstrel to

[1] 'Danske Romanzer, hundrede og ti.' Samlede og udgivne af Christian Winther. Tredie forögede Udgave. Kjöbenhavn: Forlagt af Universitets boghandler, C. A. Reizel.

sing about. Yet this poetry possesses a sweet tenderness, and not unfrequently a savoury humour, very delightful to the organs of intellectual taste, and very apt to evaporate, like some chemicals, in the crucible of the translator.

It is not our purpose, in the present paper, to attempt an elaborate account of Danish romances. We wish merely to touch lightly on such points of peculiarity as the subject presents, and to illustrate our remarks by some few specimens, rendered by us into English, as literally as possible, and with an attempt to conserve the movement and spirit of the originals. The volume of romances selected and edited by Herr Winther, who is favourably known in Denmark both as poet and novelist, may be accepted as a fair collection of ballad poems by the best Danish authors, from Oehlenschläger, the tragedian, down to Herr Winther himself. It contains nothing at all startling,—the incidents of many of the poems are about as fraught with interest as the old English rhyme about Jack and Jill; but a great portion of it possesses an inexpressible charm for one who has gone at all deeply into the peculiarities of the language. Some of the pieces are quaintly pathetic, like the following by Hans Andersen :—

THE SNOW-QUEEN (SNEE-DRONNINGEN).

Deep on the field lies the snowdrift white,
But in yonder cottage there shines a light:
There for her well-beloved waits the maid,
In the lamp's dim shade.

The mill is still ; see, the mill-wheel stands ;
Smoothing his golden hair with his hands,
The miller's man starts, with a glad ho ! ho !
Over ice and snow.

He sings as he fights with the wind that blows
His fresh young cheeks to the bloom of the rose ;
Past cot and field, in the black dark sky,
Rides the Snow-Queen by.

'Fresh in the snowlight's gleam thou art—
I choose thee to be my own sweetheart !
To my floating island come follow me,
Over mountain and sea.'

Fast and thick fell the snow-flock yet—
'I capture thee now in my flowery net !
Where the snow-mass over the wold is spread
Stands our nuptial bed.'

No more in the cottage gleams the light ;
Round and round whirls the snowdrift white ;
A shooting star falls with a quick, keen spark—
Now all is dark !

O'er wood and meadow the sun upcreeps.
In his bridal bed he so sweetly sleeps.
The little maid trembles, she runs to the mill—
But the wheel stands still.

Assuredly a fine little poem. One line particularly,—

'I Ringdands hvirvler den hvide Snee,'

possesses a perfect music, which it is difficult to convey in English. The 'Snow-Queen' is a fair specimen of the delicate vein of an author whose fairy tales have lately made him very popular in England. In

Denmark he is an idol; and nothing evinces more finely the reverent gentleness of the Danish people than the fact, that whenever this poet passes through the streets of Copenhagen, the people lift their hats to him, murmuring, 'God bless Hans Christian Andersen!' And Andersen is worthy of this homage, if only for the sake of the many little faces which he has lit up with joy and wonder in all parts of Europe. He is the children's Santa Claus—a magical fellow! He has only to wave that wondrous wand of his, and straightway pixies, elves, mermaids, and giants swarm in earth and sea. He is never very comical,—what humour he has resembles the frank, smiling manner of a man who is talking to young people, and knows how to please them. Even in his more ambitious writings he seems to be addressing good little children, clever enough to understand him, but only children after all. This manner is common to most of his fellow Danish authors, though Andersen adopts it the most successfully. 'Come round my knees, and promise all to be very good, and I will tell you a pretty little story!' Then, 'Once upon a time.' The Danes seem to like to be treated in this way. They flock lovingly around the narrator, and listen admiringly, and shudder terribly at horrors which would be considered very mild in wicked England.

These Danish romances abound in stories of elves, and mermen, and other wonderful creatures of the earth and deep. Here are Ewald's 'Liden Gunver,' Thiele's 'Guldfisken,' and Staffeld's 'Elverpigerne og Börnene,' —three poems which show charmingly the mild Danish fashion of looking at the supernatural :—

## LITTLE GUNVER.

Little Gunver wander'd pensive and white
In the twilight cold;
Her heart was wax, but her soul was bright
And proven gold.
O beware, my child, of the false men-folk!

Little Gunver fish'd at the brink of the ocean
With a silken chain;
The waters were heaved—with tempestuous motion
Trembled the main.

Uprose from the water a merman fair,
All with weeds behung,
His eyes were bright, and his voice was rare
As the harp's tongue.

'Little Gunver, ever in love's keen fire
I am burning for thee;
My heart grows weak, I faint and I tire—
O pity me!

'O reach me, O reach me, over the shore,
But one arm of snow;
I will press it once to my heart—no more—
To ease my woe!

'Little Gunver, my head is mild—despite
Of its shell forlorn—
My name is Trusty, I love the right,
And deceit I scorn.'

'And here is my arm to reward thy love,
And to ease thy pain;
Beautiful merman, reach up above,
And take the twain.'

He drew her down from the shore, and leapt
Where no tempest groans ;
Like the storm was his laugh, but the fishes wept
Over Gunver's bones.
O beware, my child, of the false men-folk !

## THE GOLD-FISH.

The fisher saddles his wingèd horse,
On the noisy ocean to take his course.

The billows roll on the white sea strand,
As the hardy fisherman rides from land.

He pulls then up his fishing-line,
By the hook there dangles a gold-fish fine.

He laughs in his sleeve, crying, 'Never, I wis,
Saw I a fish in gold raiment like this !

'Had I a piece for each gold-scale fair,
'Twere fortunate fishing indeed, I swear.'

The gold-fish flutter'd and leap'd with its fins,
Dancing about round the fisherman's shins.

'Softly, thou gentleman wealthy and proud,
Thou can'st not escape,' quoth the fisher, aloud.

The gold-fish murmur'd, and gasp'd for breath,
Then began the oration that followeth :—

'Thou seest my wealth, poor fisherman !
Give thee good fortune I will, and can !

'Cast me again in the deep green sea,
And happy gifts will I give to thee.

'My mother, queen of all fish below,
Shall give thee bolsters and linen of snow.

'My father, a king far down in the sea,
Healthy and happy shall render thee.

'To my lover who seeks me down in the deep,
Cast me, and still thou my riches shalt keep!'

'If I to the oath of a fish give heed,
The neighbours will laugh at me indeed!

'My bolsters and linen I care not to take,
My own good woman can better make!

'But if to a lover thou plighted be,
Lovers shall never be sever'd by me.'

He threw the tremulous fish in the main:—
'Lord, keep me from such a poor capture again!

'If to-morrow a like should bite at my line
I must starve, or devour it, I opine!'

In his hut at night, with an aspect wan,
Speechless and sad, sat the fisherman.

On the morrow morning his boat he took,
And warily baited his fishing-hook.

The moment his line in the sea he threw
The float sank deep in the waters blue.

He quietly laugh'd in his sleeve, and thought,
'Once more a gold-jacketed fish have I caught!'

He drew then up his line—behold!
On the hook there dangled a guinea of gold.

Again and again his line he flung,
Never a fish to the hook there hung;

But so oft as he look'd for a fish—behold!
Guinea on guinea of precious gold.

## THE ELF-MAIDS AND THE CHILDREN.

Three little ones sat in a flowery mead
In the twilight grey;
At home their mother is making their bed—
Where linger they?
With laughing cheeks rosy,
They skip to and fro
Where the flowers upgrow,
Plucking their Whitsun posy.

Down, down the mountain three elf-maids reel
From the ash-crown'd height,
'Mid mists, like the web of a spinning-wheel,
Their raiments white
In the wind back-blowing;
Each fairy shoe
Just brushes the dew
From the tops of flowers fresh blowing.

They sing so sweetly, they sing to the three:—
'Hail, children, who play
With flowery toys and laugh in glee,
Come follow and stray
Under the mountain olden,
And the ivory row
Of nine-pins throw
Over with bowls pure golden!

'Join ye, O join ye, us maidens three,
O join ye, and all
The under blossoms shall pluck and see
With the song-birds small,
Merrily, merrily singing,
Building their bowers
Of lily flowers
And pearls, like seeds, upflinging.'

The little ones wax so heavy in mind,
Sink so dreamily,
They are whirr'd along on the twilight wind—
But sleep all three!
But the flowers deplore them,
While swiftly they fall
To the elf-maids' call,
And the mountain closes o'er them.

Upon the morrow the father runs
To the aspen hill;
'The elfins have stolen thy little ones,
And guard them still:
Green turfs are growing
O'er their heads, a stone
At their feet lies prone,
And these of the elves' bestowing.'

In the above pretty literal renderings we have followed the measures of the originals. There is a droll quaintness about Herr Trofast, or Trusty, the melancholy and deceitful merman; but he is a hypocrite, like all the rest of his tribe. According to the Danish notion, the Havmœnd and Havfruer are by no means good people. Like the Elverpiger, their mission is to lure to death the unwary traveller. The sea-ladies especially are artful syrens, like the dancing mermaid in the following lyric, by Ingeman:—

THE MERMAID.

The moon shines red 'mong her starry crew,
The mermaid dances in sea-caves blue,
The waves toss black o'er the white sea-sand,
There cometh a youth to the naked strand,
Who yearns for a blushing kind one.

The mermaid smiles so wantonly,
She seems so gentle, so fair, so free—
O beware, O youth, beware and depart,
So little dazzles the youthful heart,
And the mists of midnight blind one!

'Come hither, heart's queen—oh, come hither to me,
Who danceth, who singeth on this wild sea:
I have wander'd south, I have wander'd north,
I have sought thee over the whole wide earth—
On earth I have found thee never.'

Wildly he danceth, hand in hand,
With the naked maid, on the white sea-sand;
The moon turns pale 'mong her starry crew,
Downward he leaps in the waters blue,
Which close above him for ever.

After a while these mermen and mermaids become tiresome. They are very charming at first sight, from the novelty of the thing; but being, in reality, dull and uninteresting, one tires of them. They swarm in the Danish romances,—born of the music awakened in the brain by the perpetual murmur of the ocean along the Danish shore.

It is seldom or never that one encounters, in Danish poetry, any descriptions of external nature—such as have been garnered in gorgeous sheaves by the English Muse. We, who have been familiar from boyhood with the home-pictures drawn by such artists as Milton and Thompson, feel this want greatly. But it is no fault of the Danish poets. Were there anything to describe in Danish scenery, they would picture it well; but the fault lies not in themselves, but in the stars which placed them

in so unpicturesque a land. It is to find inspiration in nature, and to relieve their souls of the dreary land prospect, that they rush so frequently down to the wavy shore and gaze seaward. The ocean brims with sounds and similes; and as a consequence, there is a salt-sea flavour about all good Danish lyrics. History, moreover, has made the water sacred. Long ago the old Norse kings hoisted their sails of silk and sailed royally through the Skaggerack southward, and (as Ben Jonson phrases it) 'the narrow seas were shady' with their ships. So such heroes as Knud den Store (Canute the Great) and Hakon Jarl, abound in Norwegian song. We regret we cannot find space for one of those legendary ballads in which Oehlenschläger excels. We translate instead the best of his romantic poems, founded on the Scandinavian mythology:—

## THE GIFT OF ÆGIR.

While the high gods sported
  Where the salt blue sea,
Near the isle of Ægir,
  Moan'd tumultuously,
Ægir, god of ocean,
  Grasp'd a drinking horn,
Which a cunning artist
  Did with power adorn.

Never snail-shell lying
  In the waters blue,
Was so strangely fashion'd,
  And so fair of hue;

Speck'd with marvellous colours,
Whence soft lustres break,
And grotesquely twisted,
Like a speckled snake.

The red wound melting
In the gold and white,
And the bowl within was
Spacious and bright;
In the bottom glitter'd
A carbuncle green,
And the fair rim sparkled
Into golden sheen.

The goddesses assembled
Praised the beauteous cup:
Ægir cried, 'Uove!
Fill the beaker up!'
With her hair rush-plaited
Stood the sea-maid sweet,
Blue her beauteous girdle,
Small her tender feet.

Follow'd by her sister,
While the great gods smiled,
With her virgin bosoms
Swelling plump and mild,
While beneath those bosoms
Her warm heart shook,
Stretching white arms dumbly,
She the snail-horn took.

Then the young sea-maiden,
Blushing bright of hue,
Like a swan plunged swiftly
In the waters blue;

Reappearing quickly
  She upheld the cup,
And with small pearls dewy
  It was brimming up !

Ægir's great brown fingers
  Gripp'd the horn ;—quoth he :
'God Ægir sendeth
  A gift from his green sea ;
To the goddess only,
  Of the beauteous throng,
Who is mightiest, greatest,
  Shall the horn belong.'

Then the beech-crown'd Frigga
  In her beauty rose,
And her heavenly glances
  Round the hall she throws :
'Than the earth's fair mother,
  Odin's stately queen,
Who is mightier, greater,
  In the gods' demesne?'

Then Gesion stretch'd snowy
  Hands towards the sea
(Never was a maiden
  Fruitful-loin'd as she ! ) :
'Who ploughs the earth, and makes it
  Fruitful as can be?
Drops the rain pure golden,
  Ægir, who but me?'

Then rose Eir, upholding
  Root and glittering knife :
'How have you trembled
  For the hero's life?

What is land, what valour,
  Without health's pure shower?
And what gift can liken
  With my healing power?'

Rota, high and mighty,
  Rose with stately glance,—
All the gods assembled
  Gazed upon her lance:
'Ye of life have prated,
  Powers assembled here;
What stops life's strong action?
  Rota's fatal spear!'

Then smiled Freya, tripping
  On her feet snow-white
To the spot where Ægir
  Held the goblet bright:
'Give the horn to Freya!
  Ægir, hour by hour
All the earth is crying,
  "Love has greatest power."'

On his knee she sat her,
  With a fond caress,
From her limbs of beauty
  Floated back her dress;
Round his neck she wound her
  Alabaster arms,
Let him see her bosoms
  In their naked charms.

Ægir grasp'd the goblet,
  Fill'd with flaming fire,
When, hark! soft music
  Broke from Bragi's lyre!

As the god of ocean
Listen'd wondering-eyed,
Saw he gentle Ydun [1]
At her husband's side.

With her crape-bound forehead,
And her beauteous waist
Like a slender tendril,
Sat she dumb and chaste ;
Brown her hair's rich brightness,
In a knot upbound,
Dewy azure pansies
In the tresses wound.

She a bowl pure golden
Held in hand snow-white.
For when Bragi playeth
On his harp strings bright,
Hanging fruit grows fragrant,
Scenting sea and land,
And the fruit drops juicy
Into Ydun's hand.

And the mild-eyed goddess,
With her sweetness wise,
Broke the spell of even
Freya's witching eyes.
'Ydun !' cried Ægir, loudly,
'To the harp of gold
Sing what wondrous treasure
Thy pure bowl doth hold !'

With a voice which murmurs
Like the nightingale,
When unseen it fluteth
In a leafy dale,

[1] The holder of the precious fruit whereby the gods continually renewed their immortality.

To the harp sang Ydun,
At the sea-king's call,
And the wondrous music
Witch'd the hearts of all.

'Only those small apples,
Beautiful of hue,
Fresh and sweet and juicy,
May the gods renew!
Drank they not the juices
Of this fruit of gold,
Odin would grow hoary,
Freya worn and old!

'While the harp of Bragi
Chimes melodiously,
Lo! the ripe fruit droppeth
From the holy tree;
Strength, and health, and beauty,
An immortal life,
These alone can give ye!'
Thus sang Bragi's wife.

And in awe and wonder
Heark'd the gods the while;
Then, behold, King Ægir
Pour'd, with eager smile,
In the lap of Ydun
All the white pearls small—
'Take the gift, O Ydun!
Mightiest of all!

'And I ask thee only,
For this gift I give,
But to sip the juicy
Fruit whereby we live;

Of my deed and treasure
Sing a Runic rhyme,
Let it sound in beauty
Down the tracks of time.'

Gentle Ydun promised ;
With the snowy-fair
Pearls she deck'd the foreheads
Of each goddess there ;
Gave the horn to Bragi,
To be kept for use,
Wet the lips of Ægir
With immortal juice !

If thereafter Loke,
With the heart of gall,
Had not stolen darkly
On the banquet hall,
Then had minstrel Sœmund
Sang this song of mine ;
But the great theme perish'd
In the less divine.

That the wondrous story
Should not perish quite,
Did my goddess bid me
Strike the gold harp bright,
Mists of ages vanish,
Valhal's glories shine,
And the fruit of Ydun
Giveth life divine !

Oehenschläger, by the way, has written a poem about Shakspeare, which, to say the least of it, is exceedingly amusing. It commences thus:—

'I Warwikshire der stander et Huus,
Det truer med ut falde til Gruus,
Til Bolig det ei kan gavne ;
Men yndig sig strœkker den gamle Muur,
Omkrandset af den unge Natur,
Og i Ruden er hellige Navne.'

It is a ballad chronicle of the great poet's life, and follows Shakspeare from the period of his deer-shooting freaks up until his play-writing in London. According to Oehlenschläger, 'William' is wandering in the moonlight, when Apollo, desirous of taking his favourite from a weaver's stool, instructs Diana to take the shape of a stag in a lonely path,—'en Kronkjort paa en eensomme Sti.' The stag is a splendid creature, and 'William' is too much of a sportsman not to long to kill it. He hesitates for a minute ; but at last, plaf! goes the gun, and down falls the bleeding deer. When the deed is done, the full extent of his danger flashes on the assassin. He must fly from the vengeance of the lord of the manor ; and he immediately departs for London, hastily making what the Scotch call 'moonlight flitting.' In the metropolis he falls into his proper sphere, and Apollo is satisfied. Instead of weaving clothing on a stool, he weaves tapestries which surpass even the masterpieces of Raphael, and which bloom like roses of eternal May. One portion of this poem, in which Desdemona is compared to the snow of night, is exceedingly pretty.

The Danes seem to possess little humour of the intellectual sort ; yet, for what we English know, there may be much mother wit—or what the Scotch call 'wut

—amongst them. The humour which appears in their poetry is of the schoolboy sort, and turns a good deal on practical joking—a sport which boys, and nations in their infancy, are very fond of. The two following poems —the first by J. Baggesen, and the second by Christian Winther—are fair specimens of a style of humorous writing which is very popular in Denmark. The one turns on a very bold case of practical joking, and the other, for the most part, is a mild matter of verbal punning. We have rendered them both as literally as possible, though the task has been by no means an easy one:—

## RIDDER RO AND RIDDER RAP.

There dwelt in Thorsinge cavaliers two
(Who rode very seldom to fight!),
If Thorsinge's chronicles be true,
The one, Herr Dull, was lazy enew,
But one, like his name, was Bright.

They woo'd with gold and with witching speech
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right!)
The lily-white daughter of Overreach,—
Dull woo'd her with gold, Bright woo'd her with speech;
But Signe was fondest of Bright.

Herr Overreach loved gold-heaps and gold
(Ay, gold is a tempting sight!);
He knew Dull's coffers bright guineas did hold,
So he scolded fair Signe for being so cold.
She wept, but abandon'd Bright.[1]

[1] *Gav Kurven til Rap.* Literally, gave Rap '*the basket;*' but *Anglicè*, gave him the 'cold shoulder.'

Now bridegroom Dull by the ocean rode
(They rode very seldom to fight);
He trotted along to his bride's abode,—
Ay, bridegroom Dull to the wedding rode.
'I, too, ride thither!' said Bright.

Forth with the bride came the bridegroom proud
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right);
Through the portal they join'd the wedding crowd,
While the men and the women shouted aloud.
'See, *I* am here!' said Bright.

To the bride-room wander'd the bridal train
(She saw each bridal knight).
Goblet on goblet they quaff'd amain,
To the bridegroom's joy and the sweet bride's pain.
'Ay, tipple your fill!' said Bright.

Dull, tippling and tippling, sat on a form
(Ay, tippling, the lazy wight!),
Preparing the bridal chamber warm;
Within were maidens, a merry swarm.
'Ay, ye may giggle!' said Bright.

So they carried the bride to the bridal bed
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right!),
The bridegroom still muddled his lazy head.
'Ay, sit you there! tippling, though newly wed!
I'll take your place,' said Bright.

He took little Signe's hand snow-white
(They run and embrace with delight),
Then he bang'd the door and fasten'd it tight;
'Hi! boy, go wish Herr Dull good night.
I'm going to sleep!' said Bright.

Off to Herr Bridegroom the little boy sped
(Ay, bridegroom—indolent wight!);
Herr Bridegroom! Herr Bridegroom! lift up your head!
Rap sits with the bride on the bridal bed.
'I do indeed!' said Bright.

The bridegroom raps at the door with a zest
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right!);
'Hi! open the door, you two—you had best!
Myself with my bride will betake me to rest.'
'Ay, betake thee to rest!' said Bright.

The bridegroom knock'd on at the door as he spoke,
And the little boy added his might;
'Come out, I have now had enough of the joke;
Come out, Ridder Rap, to the rest of the folk.'
'Ah! see if I do!' said Bright.

Then hammer'd and hammer'd the bridegroom old,
Ay, hammer'd with all his might;
'If thou within with my bride mak'st bold,
I'll revenge it—hark thee—a thousandfold.'
'Go to the devil!' said Bright.

Fiercely pale grew Herr Bridegroom's cheek
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right);
'Quit, quit my bride, and thy foolish freak,
Ere I fly to the King and justice seek.'
'Do as you please!' said Bright.

Early at morn, 'neath the breaking day
(They rode very seldom to fight),
Dull saddled his horse, and gallop'd away,
Making haste to the King to say his say.
'I, too, ride thither!' said Bright.

'Herr King, I married a beauteous bride
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right);
But after the bridal this Ridder hied
To the bridal chamber, and slept by her side.'
'That did I, I own!' said Bright.

'Since ye both the maiden hold so dear
(And ride so seldom to fight),
'Tis better to settle the matter here,
And with one another to break a spear.'
'Ay! that is the best!' said Bright.

The very next morning, when rose the sun
(Ay, the sun, with his pleasant light),
Dull mounted his charger, a pearl of a one,
And the whole Court gather'd to see the fun.
'See! here am I!' said Bright.

The very first joust, while the Court stood round
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right),
Bright's charger slipp'd in the forward bound,
And slipp'd, and fell to its knees on the ground.
'Now help me, God!' said Bright.

The second joust, as these champions good
Wax fiercer and fiercer in fight,
From their bosoms trickled the red, red blood,
Dull fell from his horse to the dust and mud.
'There lies Herr Dull!' said Bright.

Home gallop'd Bright at a mighty rate,
In happy, victorious might;
And saw sweet Signe eagerly wait,
A virgin still, at the castle gate.
'Now art thou mine!' said Bright.

Now Bright has gain'd what he loves the best
(By rent-roll, by reason, by right);
Now lies his head upon Signe's breast,
Now on his arm does she, sleeping, rest.
'See! all is merry!' said Bright.

## KNIGHT KALV (CALF).

King Wolmer sat surrounded
By all his captains tall,
And dealt out land and castles
At will to each and all.
With bending head above them
The merry King did sit,
While guest and humorous banter
His face with laughter lit.

He gave them each a portion,
Adding his jest the while;
Each took his portion gladly,
And thanked him with a smile.
The northern bit of country
Was Elske Brok's [1] good share;
'Creep in the sand,' quoth Wolmer,
'You'll find house-shelter there.

'Where prowl the wolves and foxes
The goose is seldom found;
And you shall settle, therefore,
Each in appropriate ground.
But little Morten Due,[2]
He shall to Aalholm flee,
There sit on grassy hillocks,
Or build i' the beechen tree!

[1] *Anglicè*, badger. [2] *Due*, dove.

'Where shall we settle Galten?[1]
In Krogen let him gnaw;
We call you Hog with justice,
You have so sharp a claw;
The sea-gulls you can seize on,
That o'er the capes will pass.
On Kalv I settle Ribe,
For it abounds in grass!'

But Ridder Kalv grew angry,
Clench'd teeth, and made demur;
'That mouthful is too stringy—
God's death! am I a cur?'
He grasp'd his sword in anger,
And slung it on his thigh;
'The hedge I now spring over,
And to the Germans fly!'

His horse he fiercely mounted,
And unto Holstein flew;
All riding-school manœuvres
He made the beast go through.
Announcing himself, with anger,
Drunk as drunk might be;
'Herr Earl, how dost thou value
My services and me?'

Rose from his seat Earl Gerhard,
And to the Ridder ran;
And shook with eager gladness
The hand of the Danish man.
He gave him two great castles,
And added gold thereto,
That the bold knight might hold him
Both liberal and true.

[1] *Galten*, the pig.

But discontent and anger
Kalv troubled o'er and o'er;
His hawking, hunting, singing,
Contented him no more.
With wrinkles on his forehead
The knight doth sit and pine;
The very sun no longer
Shines as it used to shine.

One evening in winter
King Wolmer sat in hall,
And drain'd his golden goblets
Among his captains all.
Then roar'd the guard full loudly
Who sentinell'd at door,
'Here comes, upon my honour,
Herr Ridder Kalv once more!'

In stepp'd the knight full slowly,
With glances downward bent,
Paler, gentler, humbler,
Calmer than when he went.
He next with shameful tremor
Did Wolmer's slippers kiss;
He was so sad of spirit,
And he was so pale, I wis!

'Herr King, Herr King, forgive me!
I knew not what I did;
I was an angry donkey,
And I am fairly chid!
But I have not been sleeping
In Holstein there so long—
I bring for your acceptance
Two castles great and strong.'

His face bent down, not angry,
King Wolmer from his throne,
While jest and merry laughter
Upon his features shone ;
And the sweet cup of friendship
He gave with royal hand.
So rose he, smiling slily
Upon the smiling band.

'And hear, beloved captains,
What I have got to say ;
This Kalv can add, my captains,
As well as take away !
As Calf his stall he quitted,
But as a monster cow,
He brings at last returning
Two mighty calves, I trow.'

## *POETS IN OBSCURITY.*

### I.

### GEORGE HEATH, THE MOORLAND POET.

IT was one day in the late autumn of 1870, when the silvern light and the grey cloud were brooding over the windless waters and shadowy moors of Lorne, that we leant over a little rural bridge close to our home in the Highlands, and watched the running burn, where, in the words of Duncan Bàn of Glenorchy—

> With a splash, and a plunge, and a mountain murmur,
> The gurgling waters arise and leap,
> And pause and hasten, and spin in circles,
> And rush and loiter, and whirl and creep ;

and on that day, as always when we stand by running water, we were thinking of the author of the 'Luggie,' whose tale we have told to the world both in prose and verse ; thinking of him and wondering why the very brightness of his face seemed to have faded into the dimness of dream, so that we found it almost difficult to realise that David Grey had lived at all. The fair shape seemed receding further and further up the mysterious vistas, and the time seemed near when it would vanish

altogether, and be invisible even to the soul that loved it best. The thought was a miserable one. It is so hateful that grief should grow dull so soon ; that the inconsolable should find the fond habit of earthly perception obliterating memory ; that passionate regret should first grow sweet, and then faint, and finally should fade away ; and that, until a fresh shock comes from God to galvanise the drowsy consciousness, the dead should be more or less forgotten—the mother by her child, the mistress by her lover, the father by his son, the husband by the wife ; and all this though heaven might be thronging with dead to us invisible, with eyes full of tears and straining back to earth, with faces agonised beyond expression to see the bereft ones gradually turning their looks earthward, and brightening to forgetfulness and peace.

While we were full of such thoughts, the Highland postman passed and handed our letters, and the first packet we opened was a little volume, 'Memorial Edition of the Poems of George Heath, the Moorland Poet.'[1] There was a portrait, a memoir, and some two hundred pages of verse. The portrait struck us first, for about lips and chin there was a weird reminiscence ; and on the whole face, even in the somewhat rude engraving, there was a look seen only on the features of certain women, and on those of poets who die young—a look unknown to the face of Milton, or of Wordsworth, or of Byron, but faintly traceable in every likeness of Shelley that we have ever seen, and almost obtrusive in

[1] London : Bemrose and Sons, Paternoster Row.

the one existing portrait of Keats. This look is scarcely describable—it may even be a flash from one's own imagination; but it seems there, painful, spiritual, a light that never was on sea and land, quite as unmistakable on poor Kirke White's face as on the mightier lineaments of Freidrich von Hardenburg. Next came the memoir, and then the verse. It was what we anticipated—the old story over again; the story of Keats, of Robert Nicoll, of David Gray; the old story with the old motto, 'Whom the gods love die young.' Though it came like a rebuke, it illuminated memory. What had seemed to die away and grow into the common daylight was again shining before me—the face of the dear boyish companion who had died, the eyes that had faded away in divine tears, the look that had been luminous there and was now dimly repeated in the little woodcut of George Heath. Out of almost the same elements, nature had wrought another tragedy, and through nearly the same process another young soul had been consecrated to the martyrdom of those who sing and die.

Is it worth telling over again, this tale that nature repeats so often? Is it worth while tracing once more the look with which we are so familiar, the consecrated expression Death puts upon the eyes and mouth of his victims? Is not the world sad enough without these pitiful reminders? Genius, music, disease, death—the old, weary, monotonous tune, have we not heard enough of it? Not yet. It will be repeated again and again and again, till the whole world has got it by heart, and

its full beauty and significance are apprehended by every woman that bears a son. At the present moment it comes peculiarly in season: for England happens to be infested at present by a school of poetic thought which threatens frightfully to corrupt, demoralise, and render effeminate the rising generation; a plague from Italy and France; a school æsthetic without vitality, and beautiful without health; a school of falsettoes innumerable—false love, false picture, false patriotism, false religion, false life, false death, all lurking palpable or disguised in the poisoned chalice of a false style.

Just when verse-writers who never lived are bitterly regretting that it is necessary to die, and thinking the best preparation is to grimace at God and violate the dead, it may do us good to read the old story over again, this time in the rude outline of a life which was even more than ordinarily conscious of poetic imperfection.

George Heath was born at Gratton, a hamlet in the moorlands of Staffordshire, on March 9, 1844. He was the eldest son of poor parents, who lived in an old weather-beaten cottage in a lonely part of the moors, and farmed a small piece of the adjoining ground. At the National School of Horton he learned to read and write, but at a very early age he was compelled to work as a farm-labourer in his father's fields. For some reason unknown to me, but most probably because he was somewhat too frail for hard work out-of-doors, he was afterwards apprenticed to a carpenter, 'Mr. Samuel Heath, of Gratton, joiner and builder;' and here some

secret literary influence reached him—'fancy,' to quote his own words, 'indulged in wildly beautiful dreams to the curl of the shavings and rasp of the saw'—and with that, awoke the delicious hunger we all remember, the never-satisfied appetite for books. What he read, how and where he read, how his later thoughts were affected by what he read, cannot, of course, be determined by a stranger, though I shall not be far wrong in guessing that he was quite as eager to acquire knowledge of a useful sort as to gratify his as yet faint poetic tastes. Youths overdosed with school hate useful knowledge, but the poor half-starved ignoramus devours it, and finds it sweeter to his taste than honey. Heath's best friend in those days, and all days after, seems to have been a young man named Foster, described in the memoir 'as a young man of like mind with himself—one who had received a good education at the old grammar school of Alleyne's, at Uttoxeter, and to whom a well-stocked library at home had always been accessible.' Foster could draw, and was ambitious to distinguish himself as an artist. The portrait of Heath is from his pencil, and is quite tenderly executed. The two lads loved each other, influenced each other, inspired each other, as only two such young souls can do, and the fellowship existed till the very last. Only a few months before his death George Heath wrote in his diary, 'My dear old friend and fellow-toiler came up for just an hour. He is still as earnest and persevering as ever. He and I started together in the life struggle. We cannot be said to have fought shoulder to shoulder,

for our paths have laid apart, and he, I believe, has, through my ill-health and one thing and another, gained upon me. But we have always been one in heart, and still we are agreed our motto must be *Steadily onward.*'

The stranger who first sent us George Heath's poems, with a letter telling how tenderly some thoughts of ours had been prized by the poor boy in Staffordshire, and how we had been able to influence him for good, afterwards procured, at our particular request, the 'Diary' from which we have quoted above, and from which we shall have occasion to quote again; and it lies now before us—four little volumes, purchased by Heath for a few pence, filled with boyish handwriting, in the earlier portions clear and strong, but latterly nervous and weak, and ever growing weaker and weaker. Every day, for four long years of suffering and disease, George Heath wrote his thoughts down here. However dim were his eyes with pain, however his wasting hand shook and failed, he managed to add something, if only a few words; and let those who upbraid God for their burdens read these pages, and see how a poor untaught soul, stricken by the most cruel of all diseases, and tortured by the wretchedest of all disappointments, could, year after year, day after day, hour after hour, collect strength enough to say unfalteringly—'God, Thy will be done, for Thou art wiser than I.' When the hand is too weak to write more, a wild effort is made to say this much—'Another day; thank God! Oh, God is good!' There are men in the world—gifted men, too—who see no more in this than the submission of

despair; but they err from lack of human knowledge. The gratitude is not that of despair, but of hope, of thanks for most heavenly consecration. It is born of the strange sense of beatification which only ensues after extreme physical pain, and still more, of the quiet feeling of security consequent on great spiritual vitality; both these deepening the sufferer's conviction that he whose fondest hope was to sing living and be the chosen of man, may in all happiness sing dying and become the chosen of God. 'God has love, and I have faith,' said David Gray, just before the final darkness. 'Thanks to God for one more day,' wrote George Heath in his diary overnight; and he died peacefully in the morning. There it is, the one Word, the awful Mystery. Why do these poor lambs thank God? For what do they thank Him? Not through fear, surely, for they are brave, more fearless than any men who fall in fight. Can it be that He communicates with them in His own fashion, and gives them the supreme assurance which, in us, causes nothing but amaze? Poor lambs! bleating to the Shepherd as they die!

It was while assisting at the restoration of Hendon Church, 'just before the close of his apprenticeship in 1864,' that Heath caught the complaint, a consumption of the lungs, to which he ultimately succumbed. The writer of the memoir adds that the 'sorrow of a broken *first-love*' had something to do with his disease, but the inference is doubtful. There are, indeed, clear evidences in the poems that Heath had been passionately in love with an object he afterwards found to be un-

worthy. One of his early pieces, entitled 'The Discarded,' written on New-Year's Eve, is addressed to the girl he loved, after she had played with his heart and wounded it cruelly. It is a boy's production, with a man's heart in it—strong, nervous, real, showing inherent dignity of nature, and full of a firm voice that could not whine. Those who are now familiar with the musical ravings of diseased animalism may find freshness even in some of these lines, bald as they are in form and cold in colour :—

Ah ! but think not, haughty maiden,
That I envy thee thy power,
Or the grand and lofty beauty
Which was all thy virgin dower;
Think not, either, that I would be
Unconcerned and gay and free ;
Doff a love, and don another,
In a twilight like to thee.
No ! I sooner far would suffer
All the agony of heart—
Ay, an age of desolation—
Than be fickle as thou art ;
For it proves to me, my spirit
Has not lost the stamp divine ;
That my nature is not shallow,
Is not base and mean as thine.
Neither think thou that my being
Yearns towards thee even yet ;
That a smile of thine would banish
All I never may forget ;
That a look of thine would make me
All I dreamed I once might be ;
That one gleam of love would chain me
Once again a slave to thee.

* * * * * *

Should the richest of the carver,
And the fairest of the loom,
And the choice of art and nature
Lustre round thy beauties' bloom ;
Ah ! should all the gifts and graces
Gather round thee and conspire
In thy form to fix their essence,
Flush thy face with spirit-fire ;
Nay ! shouldst thou in tears, forgetting
Beauty-love is calm and proud,
Shouldst thou humble thee, and bow thee
Where I once so meekly bowed :
Having once deceived me, never,
Never more, whate'er thy mien,
Couldst thou be to me the being
That thou mightest once have been.
No, alas ! thy tears might give me
Less of pride, and less of scorn,
Deeper pity, deeper shadow,
Make me sadder, more forlorn.

These were the utterances of a lofty nature, capable of becoming a poet sooner or later; already indeed a poet in soul, but lacking as yet the poetic voice. That voice never came in full strength, but it was gathering, and the world would have heard it if God had not chosen to reserve it for His own ears. The stateliness of character shown in this little love affair was never lost from that moment, and is in itself enough to awaken our deepest respect and sympathy.

In 1865 appeared a little volume by Heath, under the title of 'Preludes,' consisting chiefly of verses written

during the first year of his illness. These poems, like all he wrote, are most noteworthy for the invariable superiority of the thought over the expression. They are not at all the sort of verses written by brilliant young men. Their subjects are local places, tales of rude pathos like 'The Pauper Child,' and religious sentiment. Here, as in the 'Discarded,' there is too much of the old tawdry metaphor characteristic of the pre-Wordsworthian lyrists, and to some extent of Wordsworth himself; and we read with little pleasure about 'blushing spring in her robe of virgin pride,' summer's 'gushing tide,' 'Deception's soulless smile,' 'flower-enamelled glades,' and 'halcyon glory;' hear too many allusions to the 'zodiac' and the (most insufferable) 'zephyr,' and note too many such words as 'empyrean,' 'amaranthine,' 'lambling,' 'fledgeling,' 'glorious,' 'gorgeous.' Nevertheless, there is truth in the verses. The poor boy is not composing, but putting his own experience into the form that seems beautiful to him, however unreal it seems to us. He had not read widely enough to be consciously guilty of insincerities of style.

But as he lingered, confiding daily in the little diary as to a friend's bosom, George Heath read more. He received lessons in Latin and Greek from the Vicar (Latin and Greek! for a poor soul going to speak the tongue of the angels!); and as if this was not enough, he studied arithmetic. It is sad to think of him greedily picking up any crumb of knowledge, and unconscious as yet of his approaching doom. His pen was most

busy all the time, composing poetry more or less worthy of preservation. The disease was doing its work slowly, and the fated hand was never at rest for years. For four years—1866, 1867, 1868, 1869—he kept his diary; and even the entries made when the last hope had fled are very patient.

Here are a few extracts from the diary for 1866; they tell his story with far more force and tenderness than we could hope to tell it:—

*January* 1866.—Thus, with the dawn of a new year, I commence to write down some of the most prominent features of my every-day life. Not that I have anything extra to write, but this is a critical period of my life. I may never live to finish this diary. On the other hand, should it please God to raise me up again, it will be a source of pleasure in the future to read something of the thoughts and feelings, hopes and aspirations, that rise in the mind when under the afflicting hand of Providence; and its experience will help me to *trust* God where I cannot *trace* Him.

*Thursday, January* 4.—Still feeling very unwell, with a bad cold and pain in my side, pursuing my studies much as usual, trying to get up the Latin verbs thoroughly. I have been my usual walk twice per diem across to Close Gate. The weather is still very unfavourable. I am sorry to hear that Mrs. S. Heath, sen., is very poorly. I am thinking much of a dear one far away. Praise God, He is good!

*Saturday, January* 13.—How changeable is the weather: yesterday it was fine and frosty; to-day it is dark, damp, and cheerless. How like our earthly life! Sunshine and shadow, storm and calm, all the way through. I am scarcely so well in body, and somewhat depressed in spirits. I have not received the letter that is due to me, and that I have been looking so anxiously for, at present. Though I have been struggling hard

the past week, yet I cannot see much that I have done. Courage!

*Monday, January* 15.—Almost racked to death with a fearful cough and cold, but quite as hopeful as usual. To-day Miss D. Crompton called to see us, and my very kind friend Mrs. Dear sent me a bottle of wine.

*Friday, January* 19.—I have with great difficulty finished writing out a poem of some three hundred lines in length, entitled, 'The Discarded: a Reverie.' It is my longest, and I think it will be almost my last.

*Thursday, January* 25.—I am feeling still better to-day, and lighter in heart. The weather is fine and mild, and early this morning the birds chirped and sang just as they do at the approach of spring, and the sun burst out in all his splendour. I could not remain in the house, but sauntered round the croft and down the lane. I have not yet heard from my friend.

*Monday, January* 29.—I have been writing out a few lines on the 'cattle plague.' What an alarming visitation of Providence it is! It seems to be steadily on the increase. It has come within two miles of here. I tremble to think of the consequences should it visit our home; it would sweep away all our little subsistence.

*Friday, March* 2.—It is a gloriously fine day, but keen and frosty. I am feeling the benefit of the pure air. I am grieved to hear that Mr. W. Heath has lost all his milking cows through the 'rinderpest.' This morning I received a kind letter from my friend Mademoiselle J. M. It is a nice letter, but still somehow it has left a painful impression behind.

*Wednesday, March* 14.—I am sitting by the fire-side dreaming strange fantastic day-dreams! And why? I cannot tell. This dreaming seems to have become a part of my very nature. Perhaps it is wrong, but it is so sweet! Mother is gone to market, the orphan babe is in its cradle, all is quiet, and I am poorly and unable to study; so what can I do but dream?

*Thursday, April* 26.—Still fine and hot. The aspect of

things is slowly but surely changing. Dame Nature, 'neath the sweet influences of spring, is putting on her glorious mantle! The lambs are frisking in the fields, the birds unite in sending forth one rich volume of praise to God, myriads of insects, long dormant, are waking into life! Praise God!

*Monday, May* 14.—Very unwell. The sombre goddess Melancholy has gained almost the mastery of me. I feel quite alone in the world—a puerile, unloved thing; but I think that my earthly race is almost at a close, and then if I, through the blood and mediation of Christ, am enabled to reach that bright land, O how glorious will be the change!

*Monday, June* 4.—A hot sultry day. I feel so languid and listless; but can enjoy to the full the beautiful panorama spread out before me: and, indeed, it is beautiful! The scent of dewy foliage and nectar-filled flowers fills me with a dreamy, undefined pleasure; I love the world, I love every one in it, and its Maker.

*Friday, June* 15.—I am very unwell and low-spirited; the house is dull and gloomy; outside the rain keeps falling incessantly. Mother and father are both very poorly. My kind friend, Mrs. B. Bayley, has sent me several books and magazines to look over; one especially interests me, 'Punch's collection of Leech's cuts.'

*Wednesday, July* 4.—Very wet. I am a prisoner; very poorly, forbidden by the doctor to do any close study. I am sadly low-spirited. Grieving foolishly enough that all my correspondents have forsaken me.

*Saturday, August* 4.—Another week is calmly gliding away, and strange to say the period of the year that I dreaded most is passed away, and I am still alive, and, thank Heaven, as well as usual. Two years ago in July I was taken ill, and one year since in the same month I had an issue of blood from the lungs; but, praise God, I am still alive.

*Thursday, August* 9.—I have been a walk to Close Gate, and had a game of 'croquet.' My spirits are better. There is

a grand Choral Festival at Horton Church—one hundred and sixty performers ; how I should like to hear them ! It would waft me to heaven.

*Wednesday*, *August* 22.—I have been out into the lanes and fields, watching the 'shearers' with their shiny hooks gathering the golden corn into sheaves ; far and near the eye rests upon rich fields of grain, 'white unto harvest.'

*Tuesday*, *October* 2.—I am feeling somewhat sad-hearted to-day. I suppose the fading robe of nature affects me with its melancholy ; yet it is an exceedingly fine and warm day ; perhaps it is because I have been reading Tennyson, and the grandeur of his works disheartens me, showing me how low I am.

*Thursday*, *November* 8.—Silently, slowly another day is gliding into eternity : wet, dark, and gloomy ! I am, however, feeling somewhat better to-day. Dr. White has been to see me, and informs me that my poems have had the honour of a public reading at Leek, and the knowledge of all this kindness has, in spite of the gloomy weather, cheered me up.

*Monday*, *December* 17.—A damp, foggy, uncongenial day. I have not been doing much study, for I am feeling very unwell. I have heard of a terrible calamity which happened at Talk-o'-the-Hill on Thursday last—an explosion of fire-damp, by which eighty lives were lost, leaving some sixty widows and one hundred orphans. I have been round trying to collect something for them.

*Monday*, *December* 24.—Bless God ! another year has almost passed away, and He has preserved me. Even while I write I hear the sound of 'Christmas singers,' and though the sounds are not very melodious, yet they are sweet to me, for they remind me of Christ my Saviour, whom from the earnest depths of my soul I love and bless to-night.'

It would serve no purpose to multiply our extracts. What does the world care whether this poor boy was

better or worse on such a day, whether the weather was good or bad, whether his sweetheart was true or false, whether he himself lived or died. For two more complete years George Heath kept the same simple memoranda, fluctuating all the time between hope and despair, and suffering extreme physical pain. The most pregnant entry in the whole diary is that made on February 26, 1868:—

*February* 26, 1868.—To-day I have brought down and committed to the flames a batch of letters that I received from a love that was once as life to me—such letters—yet the writer in the end deserted me. Oh, the anguish I suffered! I had not looked at them for three years, and even to-day, when I came and fingered them, and opened the portrait of the woman I loved so much, I could scarcely keep back the bitter tears. Oh, Jenny! the bitterness you caused me will never be obliterated from my heart.

According to the memoir, nearly all the poems Heath left in manuscript were written in 1867; but after that—after the miserable February 26, 1868—he wrote little, and all he wrote was sad. The year 1869 opened dark and gloomy, and Heath still lived, still sadly striving to pick up knowledge.

*Wednesday, January* 6.—Have been writing to my sister, reading English history, &c., and poring over the old, tough Latin Grammar. I have been much interested with the plotting and counter-plotting for and against the liberties of poor Mary Queen of Scots; and now the darkness is coming down over valley and hill, and another day has gone to the eternal.

*Saturday, January* 16.—Still the dreary, dead damp. Have been reading some of the myths in Smith's smaller Mythological

Dictionary—some of the accounts of the heroes and demigods. Have been much interested with Newman Hall's paper in *The Broadway*, 'My Impressions of America,' in which he describes some of the most magnificent river, lake, and mountain scenery.

*Tuesday*, *January* 26.—The dense fog is over all things. I am unwell, having passed almost a sleepless night from anxiety on account of poor John; for at midnight there was an alarm raised. John was taken suddenly worse. They feared he was dying. Our people were sent for. But he survived, thank God! Doing a little light reading, a little grammar, &c. 'Better rub than rust,' so says Ebenezer Elliot.

*Friday*, *February* 5.—Fine and mild as April. Have been all about the fields, and my heart has been thrilled beyond measure by the appearance of several beautiful and only-just-peeping daisies. The hyacinths, too, are actually springing, and the celandine is out in leaf. How magnificent are the snowdrops! These flowers seem to my barren and often sadly yearning spirit like my own children—something I have a right to love and cherish.

*Saturday*, *February* 13.—No better inside. My chest feels feverishly hot, while cold shivers run all over my exterior. I half expect that some of these attacks will prove too much for the force of nature. It feels as though my vitality were burning and washing away within me. Ah! how shall I support this weary, fluctuating life of mine? I feel almost a yearning to fly away and be at rest! My Father, be still my strength!

*Thursday*, *February* 18.—I am still a prisoner. The worry and fret of life and ambition seem quite to have left me. I have no more a recognised hope of standing amongst the glorious, the renowned in song. I have no hope of winning that for which I have toiled all these years—a wide range of knowledge, a mind imbued with great and noble thoughts, and a grand power of expressing. I shall sing still, but 't will be to soothe myself.

*Thursday*, *February* 25.—No better—worse, if anything. I can do little but lay my head down in quiet, or watch the clouds gliding turbulently over the patch of sky seen through the window, while the trees rock their arms, toss, and gesticulate. I wonder what particular lessons I should learn here. If those of patience, trust, and fortitude? 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'

*Tuesday*, *March* 9.—Here is my birthday once more. My twenty-fifth year has passed off into the eternity of the past. My twenty-sixth dawns over me. I am filled with strange thoughts; things look very dark about me now. My health is bad. Shall I, as I half expect, go down to the grave, or shall I again wake to life and energy? My God! Thou only knowest! Help me to do my duty well in any case!

*Wednesday*, *March* 10.—Little Harriet has to-day brought into the house a little bunch of the celandine flower. I dare say there are lots of various sorts of flowers beginning to show themselves. The beautiful anemones will soon be out, and I cannot go to see them! I seem to drift further and further down, am doing just nothing. A great shadow of weariness is upon me. Sent a letter—written at a many sittings—to my sister Hannah.

*Tuesday*, *March* 23.—Most deeply ill all day—utterly prostrated in mind and body. My affliction seems to have laid hold of my whole system with an iron grasp which nothing can shake off. Have read a very little of English History. It seems to me there is quite a danger of my sinking down into stupor, if not imbecility even.

*Thursday*, *April* 8.—To-day Dr. Heaton has visited me, and, as far as he is concerned, has left me without a shadow of hope. I had tried before, and believe I had earnestly said, 'My God, Thy will be done!' but when you come to find that your doom is really fixed, the pang of bitterness is none the less. But the bitterness is past, and I can trust in God.

*Friday*, *April* 23.—The day has been a beautiful one.

Outside the green foliage is beginning to sheet the landscape, and some of the trees are hung with blossoms. It has been a very quiet day with us, and I am trying to look homeward. How good is the Lord !

*Thursday, April* 29.—How beautifully the thought of my far-off home—that home whose wonder none may guess—comes to me through the glory of the sun-radiance that falls through the windows ! The easterly wind is cold, and my throat is worse. Bless God !

*Monday, May* 3.—It is the gloomiest day there has been for some time past. The rain is dripping down, doing wonders of good. I am very ill—sinking. My cough is almost continuous. But in God is my trust.

*Tuesday, May* 4.—Praise God for one more day !

The whole story was now complete, and the morning after making that last entry—'Thank God for another day'—Heath passed away, 'peacefully,' writes the author of the memoir. He was buried in Horton church-yard, and a Runic cross, designed by his friend Foster, is about to be raised over his grave, with this inscription :—

Erected in Memory
Of GEORGE HEATH, of Gratton,
Who, with few aids,
Developed in these Moorlands
Poetic powers of great promise,
But who, stricken by consumption,
After five years' suffering,
Fell a victim to that disease,
May 5, 1869, aged 25 years.

---

His life is a fragment—a broken clue—
His harp had a musical string or two,

The tension was great, and they sprang and flew,
And a few brief strains—a scattered few—
Are all that remain to mortal view
Of the marvellous song the young man knew.

We have left little or no space to speak of George Heath's poetry, the fragments of which already given were selected less for their intrinsic merit than for their value as autobiography. What struck us first when we read the little book of remains was the remarkable fortitude of style, fearlessly developed in treating most unpromising material, and the occasional intensity of the flash of lyrical emotion. There is nothing here of supreme poetic workmanship, perfect vision in perfect language, like those four lines of David Gray :—

Come, when a shower is pleasant in the falling,
Stirring the still perfume that wakes around,
Now that doves mourn, and in the distance calling
The cuckoo answers, *with a sov'reign sound!*

Nothing quite so overpowering as Gray's passionate cry :—

O God, for one clear day ! a snowdrop ! and sweet air !

No description of nature as loving, as beautiful as those in the 'Luggie,' and no music as fine as the music of Gray's songs and sonnets. But there is something else, something that David Gray did *not* possess, with all his marvellous lyrical faculty, and this something is great intellectual self-possession combined with the faculty of self-analysis and a growing power of entering

into the minds of others. The poem 'Icarus, or the Singer's Tale,' though only a fragment, is more remarkably original than any published poem of Gray's, and in grasp and scope of idea it is worthy of any writer. How the journal called the 'Lynx' contained the obituary notice of a certain Thomas String, 'a power-spirit chained to a spirit that broods,' but almost a beggar; how Sir Hodge Poyson, Baronet, deeply moved by the notice in the 'Lynx,' visited the room where String had lived,—

> In the hole where he crept with his pain and his pride,
> Mournful song-scraps were littered on every side;
> I read the damp slips till my eyes were tear-blind.
> Near the couch where he wrestled with hunger and died,
> In a dirty, damp litter of mouldering straw,
> Stood a rude alder box, which, when opened, supplied
> Such proofs of a vastly superior mind,
> As filled me with anguish and wonder and awe;

and how Sir Hodge determined to bring out the works in two volumes, with a portrait and prefatory essay,—all this is merely preliminary to the Singer's own Tale, which was to have been recorded in a series of wonderfully passionate lyrics, ending with this one:—

> Bless thee, my heart, thou wert true to me ever:
> Soft while I weep o'er thee, kiss thee, and waken
> All the sad, sweet things that murmur and quiver!
> True to me still, though of all else forsaken!
> No more I strike for the far generations,
> Lost to the hope of fame, glory, or pelf;
> And the wild songs that I sang for the nations
> Now in my sadness I wail to myself.

After that women come and find the singer dead, and uplift him, saying:—

> Soft—let us raise him, nor yield to the shrinking;
> Ah! it is sad to have never a dear one;
> Sad to depart in the night, to my thinking,
> Up in a garret, with nobody near one!
> Have we no feelings as women and mothers?
> Aren't we, from Adam, all sisters and brothers?
> * * * * * * *
> Stay, what is this 'neath his hand on his breast?
> How stiff the long fingers! 'Tis rumpled and creased,
> Long lines all awry, blotted, jumbled, and stark!
> Poor fellow! ay, true, it was done in the dark:—
> 'Ah me, for a mother's fond hand for a little—
> That tender retriever!
> Oh, love, for the soothing of woman to quiet
> This burning and fever.
> Ah, dying is bitter in darkness and hunger,
> When lonely, I wis;
> I dreamed not in days that have summer'd and fallen
> Of coming to this!'

It is impossible to represent this fragment by extracts, its whole tone being most remarkable. Of the same character, strong, simple, and original, are the love-poem called 'Edith:'

> Her face was soft, and fair, and delicate,
> And constantly reminded me of music;

and the wonderful little idyl called 'How is Celia to-day?' in which a smart 'sprightly maiden' and a 'thin battered woman' embrace passionately on the roadside and soften each other. In all these poems, and even in

the 'Country Woman's Tale' (which should never have been published in its present distorted shape), there seems to us the first tone of what might become a great human voice; and nothing is more amazing to us than to find George Heath, an unusually simple country lad, marvellously content with the old theology and old forms of thought, flashing such deep glimpses into the hearts of women. He had loved; and we suppose *that* was his clue. The greatness he could show in his love would have been the precursor, had he lived, of a corresponding greatness in art. Both need the same qualities of self-sacrifice, fortitude, and self-faith.

We shall conclude this sketch with a little piece, as slight in subject as it is tender in treatment. The readers of George Heath's posthumous book will find many such poems, and every one they read, even when it does not excite their admiration as art, will deepen their respect for the writer's stateliness of character and nobility of mind.

### THE POET'S MONUMENT.

Sad are the shivering dank dead leaves
  To one who lost love from his heart unweaves,
Who dreams he has gathered his life's last sheaves,
  And must find a grave under wintry eaves!

Dead! dead! 'mongst the winter's dearth,
  Gone where the shadows of all things go,
Stretch me full length in the folding earth,
  Wind me up in the drifting snow;

None of the people will heed it or say,
'He was a singer who fainted there,
One who could leaven with fire, or sway
Men's hearts to trembling unaware.'

No one will think of the dream-days lost,
Of the ardours fierce that were damped too soon;
Of the bud that was nipped by the morning's frost,
And shrivelled to dust in the sun ere noon.

No one will raise me a marble, wrought
With meaning symbol, and apt device,
To link my name with a noble thought,
A generous deed, or a new-found voice.

My life will go on to the limitless tides,
Leaving no trace of its current-flow,
Like a stream that starts when the tempest rides,
And is lost again in the evening's glow.

The glories will gather and change as of yore,
And the human currents pass panting by,
The ages will gather their wrinkles more,
And others will sing for a day and die.

But thou, who art dearer than words can say,
My more than all other of earth could be;
Such a joy! that the Giver I thank alway
With a glowing heart, that He gave me thee.

I shall want *thee* to dream me my dream all through,—
To think me the gifted, the Poet still,
To crown me, whatever the world may do,
Though my songs die out upon air and hill.

And, Edith, come thou in the blooming time,—
Thy world will not miss thee for just one hour;—
I'd like it best when the low Bells chime,
And the earth is full of the sunset's power,—

And bend by the silently settling heap,
While the Nature we loved is a May all round,
While God broods low on the blue arched sweep,
And the musical air is a-thrill with sound ;

And look in thy heart circled up in the past,
And if I am perfectly graven there,
Unshaded by aught, save the anguish cast
By the parting clasp, and the death despair ;

Encirqued with the light of the pale regret,
Of a 'might have been,' of a day-dream lent,
With a constant hope of a meeting yet,—
Oh ! I shall not want for a Monument.

II.

## THE LAUREATE OF THE NURSERY.

In an article entitled 'Child-life as seen by the Poets,' recently published in a leading Magazine, there appeared an allusion to the Scottish poet William Miller, whose 'Wonderfu' Wean' was printed in full to justify, if justification were needed, the high praise bestowed on its writer as one of the sweetest and truest lyric poets Scotland has ever produced. The eulogy pronounced on Miller was, as we happen to know, rather under than over coloured. No eulogy can be too high for one who has afforded such unmixed pleasure to his circle of readers; who, as a master of the Scottish lyrical dialect, may certainly be classed alongside of Burns and Tannahill; and whose special claims to be recognised as the Laureate of the Nursery have been admitted by more than one generation in every part of the world where the Doric Scotch is understood and loved. Wherever Scottish foot has trod, wherever Scottish child has been born, the songs of William Miller have been sung. Every corner of the earth knows 'Willie Winkie' and 'Gree, Bairnies, Gree.' Manitoba and the banks of the Mississippi echo the 'Wonderfu' Wean' as

often as do Kilmarnock or the Goosedubs. 'Lady Summer' will sound as sweet in Rio Janeiro as on the banks of the Clyde. The pertinacious Scotchman penetrates everywhere, and carries everywhere with him the memory of these wonderful songs of the nursery. Meantime, what of William Miller, the man of genius who made the music and sent it travelling at its own sweet will over the civilised globe? Something of *him* anon. First, however, let us look a little closer at his compositions, and see if the public is right or wrong in loving them so much.

Having before us as we write a pretty considerable quota of Miller's writings, and reading them with as dispassionate a sympathy as possible, what strikes us first is their freedom from the false and meretricious simplicity of two-thirds of the productions of the Scottish rural Muse. They are as noticeable for outspoken naturalness of manner as for fineness of poetical insight. They are such words as a happy father might say to his children, if he were, furthermore, a poet, with a fine eye for imagery, and a singer, with a delicate ear for music. They are plaintive, merry, tender, imaginative, poetical, just as the light happens to strike the hearth where the poet sits. We find ourselves in a lowly Scottish home to begin with; it is ten o'clock at night, and wee 'Willie Winkie,' a tricksy spirit who is supposed to run about the town ready to astonish any refractory child who won't go to sleep, is wandering

> Up-stairs and down-stairs
> In his nicht-gown!

The mother sits with the child, who is preternaturally wakeful, while Willie Winkie screams through the key-hole—

> Are the weans in their bed?
> For it's now ten o'clock!

One wean, at least, utterly refuses to sleep, but sits 'glowrin' like the moon;' rattling in an iron jug with an iron spoon, rumbling and tumbling about, crowing like a cock, slipping like an eel out of the mother's lap, crawling on the floor, and pulling the ears of the cat asleep before the fire. No touch is wanting to make the picture perfect. The dog is asleep—'*spelder'd* on the floor'—and the cat is 'singing grey thrums' ('three threads to a thrum,' as we say in the south) to the 'sleeping hen.' The whole piece has a drowsy picturesqueness which raises it far above the level of mere nursery twaddle into the region of true *genre*-painting. The whole 'interior' stands before us as if painted by the brush of a Teniers; and melody is superadded, to delight the ear. Are we in town or country? It is doubtful which; but the picture will do for either. Soon, however, there will be no mistake, for we are out with 'Lady Summer' in the green fields, and the father (or mother) is exclaiming—

> Birdie, birdie, weet your whistle!
> Sing a sang *to please the wean!*

Still more unmistakable is the language of 'Hairst' (the lovely Scottish word for Autumn): and we quote the poem in all its loveliness:—

Tho' weel I lo'e the budding spring,
I'll no misca' John Frost,
Nor will I roose the summer days
At gowden autumn's cost ;
For a' the seasons in their turn
Some wished-for pleasures bring,
*And hand in hand they jink aboot,*
*Like weans at jingo-ring.*

Fu' weel I mind how aft ye said,
When winter nights were lang,
'I weary for the summer woods,
The lintie's tittering sang ;'
But when the woods grew gay and green,
And birds sang sweet and clear,
It then was, 'When will hairst-time come,
The gloaming o' the year ?

Oh ! hairst-time's like a lipping cup
That's gi'en wi' furthy glee !
The fields are fu' o' yellow corn,
Red apples bend the tree ;
The genty air, sae ladylike !
Has on a scented gown,
And wi' an airy string she leads
The thistle-seed balloon.

The yellow corn will porridge mak',
The apples taste your mou',
And ower the stibble riggs I'll chase
The thistle-down wi' you ;
I'll pu' the haw frae aff the thorn,
The red hap frae the brier—
For wealth hangs in each tangled nook
In the gloaming o' the year.

Sweet Hope ! ye biggit ha'e a nest
  Within my bairnie's breast—
Oh ! may his trusting heart ne'er trow
  That whiles ye sing in jest;
Some coming joys are dancing aye
  Before his langing een,—
He sees the flower that isna blawn,
  And birds that ne'er were seen ;—

The stibble rigg is aye ahin',
  The gowden grain afore,
And apples drop into his lap,
  Or row in at the door !
Come, hairst-time, then, unto my bairn,
  Drest in your gayest gear,
*Wi' saft and winnowing win's to cool*
  *The gloaming o' the year !*

Is there in any language a sweeter lyric of its kind than the above? Not a word is wasted; not a touch is false; and the whole is irradiated with the strong-pulsing love of the human heart. It is superfluous to indicate beauties, where all is beautiful; but note the exquisite epithet at the end of every second stanza, the delicious picture of the Seasons dancing round and round like children playing at 'jingo-ring,' and the expression 'saft and winnowing win's' in the last verse. Our acquaintance with Scottish rural poetry is not slight; but we should look in vain, out of Tannahill, for similiar felicities of mere *expression.* Though there is nothing in the poem to match the perfect imagery of 'Gloomy Winter's now awa',' we find here and elsewhere in Miller's writings a grace and genius of style only achieved by lyrical poets

in their highest and best moments of inspiration. As to the question of locality, we may be still in doubt. There is just enough of nature to show a mind familiar with simple natural effects, such as may be seen by any artizan on the skirts of every great city; but not that superabundance of natural detail which strikes us in the best poems of Burns and Clare. Nor is there much more specifically of the country in 'John Frost.' It is an address which might be spoken by any mother in any place where frost bites and snow falls. 'You've come early to see us this year, John Frost!' Hedge, river, and tree, as far as eye can view, are as 'white as the bloom of the pear,' and every doorstep is as 'a new linen sark' for whiteness.

> There are some things about ye I like, John Frost,
> And ithers that aft gar me fyke, John Frost;
> For the weans, wi' cauld taes,
> Crying 'shoon, stockings, claes,'
> Keep us busy as bees in the byke, John Frost.
>
> And gae 'wa' wi' your lang slides, I beg, John Frost!
> Bairns' banes are as bruckle's an egg, John Frost;
> For a cloit o' a fa'
> Gars them hirple awa',
> Like a hen wi' a happity leg, John Frost.

This is the true point of view of maternity and poverty. 'John Frost' may be picturesque enough, but the rascal creates a demand for more clothing and thicker shoes, and he lames and bruises the children on the ice. 'Spring' is better, and furnishes matter for other verses.

The Spring comes linking and jinking through the woods,
Opening with gentle hand the bonnie green and yellow buds,—
There's flowers and showers, and sweet song of little bird,
And the gowan wi' his red croon peeping through the yird.

But the final consecration, here as before, is given by the Bairns :—

'Boon a' that's in thee, to win me, sunny Spring !
Bricht cluds and green buds, and sangs that the birdies sing ;
Flower-dappled hill-side and dewy beech sae fresh at e'en ;
*Or the tappie-toorie fir-tree shining a' in green—*

Bairnies bring treasure and pleasure mair to me,
Stealing and speiling up to fondle on my knee !
In spring-time the young things are blooming sae fresh and fair.
That I canna, Spring, but love and bless thee evermair.

The last line of the first verse is perfect.

Such are some of the little green glimpses of nature to be found in Miller's songs ; but the interior glimpses are far more numerous, from the picture of the 'Sleepy wee Laddie,' who *won't* rise till his mother 'kittles his bosie' or 'pouthers his pow with a watering-can,' down to the proud king of the farm-yard, with his coat of ruddy brown waved with gold, and his crimson crown on his head, 'tuning his pipes to Cockie-leerie-la !' The whole ethical range of these pictures is summed up in such pieces as 'Gree, Bairnies, Gree !'—before quoting which let us take one last glimpse into the Interior, on a frosty night, while the father is making 'rabbits on the wall,' to amuse the little ones, and others play on the whistle, saddle and ride the dog, and make a cart of the kitchen ladle. The mother is the speaker, and the words seem

to well up from the fulness of her heart, as we see her looking on :—

### OUR OWN FIRE-END.

When the frost is on the grun',
  Keep your ain fire-end,
For the warmth o' summer's sun
  Has our ain fire-end ;
When there's dubs ye might be lair'd in,
Or snaw wreaths ye could be smoor'd in,
The best flower in the garden
  Is our ain fire-end.

You and father are sic twa
  Roun' our ain fire-end ;
He mak's rabbits on the wa',
  At our ain fire-end.
Then sic fun as they are mumping,
When to touch them ye gae stumping,
They're set on your tap a-jumping,
  At our ain fire-end.

Sic a bustle as ye keep
  At our ain fire-end,
When ye on your whistle wheep,
  Round our ain fire-end ;
Now, the dog maun get a saddle,
Then a cart's made o' the ladle,
To please ye as ye daidle
  Round our ain fire-end.

When your head's laid on my lap,
  At our ain fire-end,
Taking childhood's dreamless nap,
  At our ain fire-end ;

Then frae lug to lug I kiss ye,
An' wi' heart o'erflowing bless ye,
And a' that's gude I wish ye,
At our ain fire-end.

When ye're far, far frae the blink
O' our ain fire-end,
Fu' monie a time ye'll think
On our ain fire-end ;
On a' your gamesome ploys,
On your whistle and your toys,
And ye'll think ye hear the noise
O' our ain fire-end.

The 'best flower in the garden,' assuredly, though the shortest in its bloom, to be remembered ever afterwards by the backward-looking wistful eyes of mortals that are children no more! And if ever there should enter into the hearts of such mortals those thoughts which wrong the brotherhood of nature and all the kindly memories of the hearth, what better reminder could be had than those words of the toiling, loving mother, seated in the fire-end, while winds shake the windows and sound up in the chimney with an eerie roar:—

GREE, BAIRNIES, GREE.

The moon has rowed her in a cloud,
Stravaging win's begin
To shuggle and daud the window-brods,
Like loons that wad be in!
Gae whistle a tune in the lum-head,
Or craik in saughen tree!
We're thankfu' for a cozie hame—
Sae gree, my bairnies, gree.

Though gurgling blasts may dourly blaw,
A rousing fire will thow
A straggler's taes, and keep fu' cosh
My tousie taps-o'-tow.
O who would cule your kail, my bairns,
Or bake your bread like me?
Ye'd get the bit frae out my mouth,
Sae gree, my bairnies, gree.

Oh, never fling the warmsome boon
O' bairnhood's love awa';
Mind how ye sleepit, cheek to cheek,
Between me and the wa';
How ae kind arm was owre ye baith:
But, if ye disagree,
Think on the saft and kindly soun'
O' 'Gree, my bairnies, gree.'

That, again, seems to us a perfect lyric, struck at once in the proper key, and thoroughly in sympathy with nature. Perhaps its full flavour can only be appreciated by those familiar with the *patois* in which it is written.

Gae whistle a tune in the lum-head,
Or craik in saughen tree!

Music and meaning are perfectly interblended.

If our object in writing were merely to demonstrate the poetic merit of William Miller, we might go on quoting piece after piece, till we had transcribed his entire nursery-repertoire. At least ten of his pieces are (to use a phrase of Saint-Beuve's) *petits chefs d'œuvre:* ten cabinet pictures worthy of a place in any collection. Few poets, however prosperous, are so certain of their immortality. We can scarcely conceive a period when

William Miller will be forgotten ; certainly not until the Doric Scotch is obliterated, and the lowly nursery abolished for ever. His lyric note is unmistakable: true, deep, and sweet. Speaking generally, he is a born singer, worthy to rank with the three or four master-spirits who use the same speech ; and we say this while perfectly familiar with the lowly literature of Scotland, from Jean Adams to Janet Hamilton, from the first notes struck by Allan Ramsay down to the warblings of 'Whistle Binkie.' Speaking specifically, he is (as we have phrased it) the Laureate of the Nursery ; and *there*, at least, he reigns supreme above all other poets, monarch of all he surveys, and perfect master of his theme. His poems, however, are as distinct from nursery gibberish as the music of Shelley is from the jingle of Ambrose Phillips. They are works of art,—tiny paintings on small canvas, limned with all the microscopic care of Meissonier. Possibly, indeed, they are not large enough or ambitious enough to attract those personages who are infected with Haydon's yearning for an enormous canvas and Gandish's appreciation of ''Igh Art ;' yet it is not improbable that it required more genius to produce them than to mix up Euripides and water into a diluted tipple for groggy schoolmasters, or to indulge in any amount of what Professor Huxley styles 'sensual caterwauling.' The highest praise that can be said of them is that they are perfect 'of their kind.' That kind is humble enough ; but humility may be very *strong*, as it certainly is here.

And *now*, what of William Miller himself? Is he

living or dead, rich or poor, sickly or well, honoured or neglected? He is alive, certainly very poor, sickly to extremity, and, so far at least as practical sympathy goes, neglected by the generation which owes him so much. Our informant, indeed, describes him as a 'cripple for life.' He resides, to his misfortune, in the depressing city of Glasgow, with its foul air, its hideous slums, and its still more hideous social life. Were our power equal to our will, this master of the *petit chef d'œuvre* should be transported forthwith to some green country spot,—some happy Scottish village, where, within hearing of the cries of children, he might end his days in peace, and perhaps sing us ere he dies a few more songs such as 'Hairst' and 'Spring.' Then might he say again, as he said once, in his own inimitable manner—

> We meet wi' blithesome and lithesome cheerie weans,
> Daffing and laughing far adoun the leafy lanes,
> Wi' gowans and buttercups busking the thorny wands,
> Sweetly singing wi' the flower-branch waving in their hands!

There might the Laureate of the Nursery enjoy for a little while the feeling of real fame, hearing the cotter's wife rocking her child to sleep with some song he made in an inspired moment, watching the little ones as they troop out of school to the melody of one or other of his lays, and feeling that he had not lived in vain—being literally one of those happy bards whose presence 'brightens the sunshine.'

To honour a poet like William Miller is not easy; he seizes rather than solicits our sympathy and admiration;

but when the thousands who love his music hear, as we have heard, that his fellow-citizens are raising a Testimonial in his behalf, to show in some measure their appreciation of his genius, help of the most substantial sort is certain to be forthcoming in abundance. Wherever Scottish speech is spoken, and wherever these words penetrate, there will awaken a response. Miller's claim to the gratitude of his countrymen is unmistakable. If that claim were contested, every child's voice in Scotland should be raised in protest, and every Scottish mother and father would be convicted of worse than lack of memory—the lack of heart. For our own part, after having indicated very briefly how Miller's compositions affect us personally, and the high poetical place we would assign them had we the will or the power to pronounce literary judgments, we can but wish William Miller God speed, and (in the words of one of his own songs) 'a coggie weel fill'd and a clean fire-end' so long as he lives to wear those laurels which have been awarded to him, north of the Tweed, by universal acclamation.[1]

[1] Alas! since this article was written, William Miller has passed away.

# NOTE

## ON ARTICLE 'JOHN MORLEY'S ESSAYS.'

SINCE this article appeared in the 'Contemporary Review,' Mr. J. K. Hunter, the local humourist alluded to in a note, has passed away. I subjoin, as a tribute to an obscure man of genius, my review of his 'Retrospect,' published in the 'Athenæum' newspaper for February 29, 1868.

*The Retrospect of an Artist's Life; Memorials of West Country Men and Manners of the Past Half Century.* By John Kelso Hunter. (Greenock: Orr, Pollock & Co.)

THIS book is the legacy—we trust, not quite the last—of Mr. J. K. Hunter, better known in the West of Scotland as 'Tammas Turnip,' who unites in his own person the craft of a cobbler and the profession of an artist, whose somewhat dark fame as a conversationalist has reached our ears, and whom we have now to recognise as an author of singular vigour and actual literary power. It is many a long day since we encountered a work of the kind so fresh, so honest, so full of that clear flavour which smacks of the sound mind and the sound body. The language is of the simplest,—a fine mixture of powerful English and broad Scotch. There is no art, save that of thorough artlessness; the manner is colloquial, and the transitions are

not always clearly to be followed. But the book will make its mark now, and live afterwards,—long after posterity has forgotten the critic who is said to have returned the proof-sheets with the solemn—and true—assertion that 'they contained a great many *grammatical blunders!*' It has only to be known to be widely appreciated. Full of picture, brimful of character, marked everywhere by sanity and sincerity, it preserves for us many phases of life which might otherwise have been forgotten or unknown, and it communicates them, moreover, through a medium as quaint and characteristic as themselves. Those who like the book will love the man. On every page we feel the light of a pleasant human face, the gleam of kindly eyes, and seem to see the horny hand of the cobbler beating down emphasis at the end of periods; and a broad, clear, ringing voice lingers in our ears, and we catch the sound of distant laughter long after the book is closed. Mr. Hunter is not a profound reasoner, nor a man of mere literary disposition. He is something higher—a man of character, a being whose humour has so individual a flavour that no competent critic, on finding any of his stories gone astray, could hesitate for a moment in affirming, 'This is, not a Jerrold, nor a Sydney Smith, nor a Dean Ramsay—no, it is a Tammas Turnip.' He apprehends character by the pure sense of touch, as it were. He sympathises most with what is sound and true, though he has a corner of his heart for the *gaudriole*. In a word, he evinces an artist's sensitiveness and a cobbler's chattiness; and, whether as painter or cobbler, he loves the race thoroughly,—he follows humanity hardily, through all the vagaries of light and shadow, even in such atmospheres as those of Glasgow and Kilmarnock.

Hunter's early days were spent in a little Ayrshire village, where everybody was very poor, and most people were marked by some strong characteristic idiosyncrasies. He began life as a ragged shearer in the fields, but, fascinated at an early age by the superior intellectual resources of the makers of shoes, he determined to be a cobbler. 'In 1812,' he writes, 'Napoleon

Bonaparte gaed away to Russia, thinking to make himself master of the unwieldy territory. That same year the United States of America declared war against Britain ; and next year, in the month of June, when the sea-fight between the Shannon and the Chesapeake took place, my mother bought a bargain of sheep's-wool and spun it hersel' on the muckle wheel, and John Wilson in the Hollows was trysted to weave it into a plaidin' web, which was to be dyed blue, and then I was to be dressed in a suit of the same.' Shortly after these great events, he became the apprentice of a queer old shoemaker in a neighbouring clachan. Here his experience of the great world began ; and many are the strange stories he has to tell us concerning those days—wild smuggling episodes, strange domestic experiences, anecdotes reeking of peat and whisky, weird country superstitions. Most of the latter may be described, in a local worthy's words, as 'stories which tell better over a dram than sitting dry-mouth'd ; there is an inventive power in whisky, whereby you can put in more of the horrible and awfu'.' Here is a wonderful glimpse of character, in the shape of 'auld Ralston,' the governor of the working department of a spinning-factory :—

Ralston, when young, married a sister of his master, in whose service he had been accounted worthy ; although some said that Mary wasna market-rife. She had some four of a family, and then fell into lingering trouble. She was bedfast for nine months ; and it was said that the morning and evening inquiry for a period before her death was the same question—'Are ye awa' yet, Mary?' A woman was got to keep her near her end ; and one night when Ralston had reached near his own door, or what some sentimentalists wad call the house of mourning, the woman stood at the door-step, her heart was full, she burst into tears, and exclaimed, 'James, the wife's gone.' Ralston looked at her rather in astonishment, and said, 'Aweel, and what's the use o' you snottering about that? Let's see some pork and potatoes, for I'm hungry.' Being served with the desired meal, he ate with a relish for a time, then taking a rest, he wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his coat, and said by way of soliloquy, 'It's a guid thing that she's awa'; she was a

perfect waster, and wad soon hae herried me out o' the door. She ate a peck o' meal in the week, drank a bottle o' whisky, ate nine tippenny oranges, forbye God knows what in the shape o' cordials. I must say that I'm weel quat o' her. But it has been a teugh job though. My first duty will be to see and get her decently buried:' which duty seemed to afford rather pleasurable sensations. His son Jock took an overgrowth, springing up to manhood a lump of delicacy; without any apparent disease, yet feeling himself unwell, he was unable to do anything for some time. A neighbour said one day to Ralston, 'I wunner that you wad keep a muckle idle fallow like Jock lying up at hame when there is evidently naething wrang wi' him but laziness.' However, within a week of this gratuitous speech Jock died, and, like his mother, had a cheerfu' burial. The man wha made the unfeeling remarks on Jock shamming his trouble was at the burial, and stood talking with another man in the kirkyard. As soon as Jock was let down into the grave, his father came to the two as they talked together, and he who had not insulted the feelings of the father before now made an effort to sympathise with the bereaved parent touching the suddenness of Jock's death, and how unexpected it seemed to him. Ralston, with great satisfaction, said—'That's a' true; but it's a guid thing that our Jock de'ed at this turn.'—'What for, James?' quo' the astonished listener.—'What way, or what for? Had he no de'ed the folk wad ha'e still been sayin' that there was naething wrang wi' him. I think he has gi'en the most obstinate o' them evidence that there was something the matter wi' him. It hasna been a' a sham.'

Elsewhere the same worthy is thus exquisitely described:—

He had a distance in his manner, a kind of isolated dignity, which at no time seemed to be the right sort of metal. Everything he said or did seemed spurious. *He walked and talked at the outer circle of friendship.*

To complete 'auld Ralston's' outline, note the following bit of observation—significant, we think, of the writer's peculiar insight:—

In the summer evenings at Dundonald the young men of the village used to play at bowls and quoits at the outskirts by the roadside. One night old Ralston made his appearance to witness

a game of quoits. He stood alone; he spoke to no one; he watched every quoit as it came up. I stood near to him and made a study of his face. His expression was intense as he eyed the quoits as they sailed through the air. He looked cold at a wide shot, as if feeling disappointed; but when a close one was played he clapped his hands, exclaiming, 'There's a good shot; aha, but there's a better!' and he looked the picture of delight. You would have thought that he had a heavy interest in the matter. Charlie Lockhart came close up to him at this moment of seeming delight. Charlie looked at the quoit and said with great emphasis, 'That's a tickler! wha played that shot, James?' James looked cold at him and said, 'What ken I? or what care I? It's a grand shot, play't wha will. *It's a' ane to me wha flings them up; it's the quoits themsel's that I watch or feel ony pleasure in seeing.*'

This is but one of many quaintly limned faces, all of which imply that Mr. Hunter, if he be one-half as subtle on canvas as on paper, must be an artist of no ordinary power of touch.

We pass over much that is good (noting in our way the thrilling chapter containing the story of Witherington the packman), in order to reach the beginning of our cobbler's career in art. Suspected of poaching, Mr. Hunter quitted his native place and settled in Kilmarnock, where his ambition was aroused by the sight of a great local work of art—the Royal Arms, painted for the Town Hall. He bought a box of water colours and a camel-hair brush for fivepence. Instead of copying the lion and unicorn, however, he made a 'study' from nature, so barbarous as to disgust even his own savage eye! His next attempt was a small profile on a card. He drew an outline, dashed in colour, and, using red copiously on the nose, made a striking portrait of Jock Steen, a dram-drinking acquaintance. Then, comparing his first two pictures, he decided that only one resembled the original; and therefore fixed on portraiture as his vocation—one which he has combined with shoemaking all his life, and follows still in the genial autumn of his days. And a wondrous portrait painter we find he is,—at any rate with pen and ink.

Every step of our cobbler's onward career is fraught with portrait and picture. The following is a specimen, not quite so subtle as many, but truly humorous :—

No eclipse, either heavenly or terrestrial, settles into permanent darkness. The garret door opened one day, and in came a particular acquaintance, one who from his heart wished me well. He was a calico-printer, wearing an appropriate and characteristic name, which often brought him into trouble. He was well known over Scotland, yet not well understood. He had a strong desire that the world should move in a proper way, and gave advice accordingly; but his theory and practice were often antagonistic. He would fain be an artist, but wanted patience. He had been at college to come out as a doctor, but left short of the mark. Volatile and unstable, yet wishing to see knowledge flowing around him, he was very communicative. He used to declare that muscle was with him fully as sensitive as mind, and he had an unfortunate knack of bringing his fist into contact with any person's mouth out of which impudence came directed to him. His combativeness was great, and his kindness of heart unbounded. Bob Clink was the name of the new patron. His portrait was to be painted, and in an original style, both as regards attitude and execution. Bob had, when in Glasgow, studied the paintings when in the Hunterian Museum, visited fine art exhibitions, been acquaint with artists. He had good taste, and gave wholesome hints as to how his portrait was to be got up. I was so well pleased with his eccentricity that I agreed that the composition was to be his and the execution mine. Bob was to be seated by a table, as in the act of some undefined study. He was to be looking up, the left elbow was to be resting on the table and the snuff-box in the left hand. The right hand, between the forefinger and thumb, was to contain a snuff, which was to be arrested on the road to the nose, which was to remain ungratified till the problem was solved. It was to represent a night study ; a candle was to be placed on the table well burned down, with a long easle crooked and melting doun the grease to show how deeply the student had been absorbed. A skull was to be on the table between the sitter and the light, one volume was to be open on the table with a confusion of old authors in mass, and a library carefully selected was to fill the background. Bob brought canvas and stretcher. The canvas was fine

linen, such as printers use to preserve their patterns at the corners or joinings of selvages. It was to be a cash transaction, and half-a-guinea was to be the sum total. All this was laid down by Bob.

At this time Hunter was a member of the Kilmarnock drawing academy, consisting of one riddle-maker, two house-painters, one cobbler, one tailor, one confectioner, one cabinet-maker, one mason, one pattern-designer, one currier, and two young artists! A motley crew, and doubtless not too highly gifted. Yet, as Mr. Hunter says, 'There is a something lovable in the naughtiest abortion produced by the pencil, as it generally is an inquiry after some great hidden, far-out-of-sight, never-to-be-seen mystery.'

We cannot linger over the interval from those days to these. The cobbler's path has been a hard, up-hill one; but he shows everywhere the firm footing of a man. The father of a huge family, he had to toil day and night, with awl or brush, for scanty wage; but his heart never failed him: he was ever ready for the world with jest or criticism, and even in the dull commonplace routine of small Scotch towns he was ever conscious of the motion and the colour of the world, and of the musical stir, under all disguises, of the great human heart. Great men, good men, droll men, mean men, had all their message to him; he slighted none, misunderstood but few.

The style of Mr. Hunter's book is rude and unpolished: but it contains a touching artlessness, a sound idiomatic force, seldom discovered in more ambitious styles. We are again and again struck by superb little snatches of word-painting. Subjoined is a string of brief bits of quotation, not equal in excellence, but all showing a vigour of style remarkable from such a quarter:—

> The first steamboat I saw was at Largs fair in 1818. That was the first one that I touched with my finger. It was on the day the Rob Roy steamer first crossed the Irish Channel to Belfast. From the heights above Largs I witnessed the spectacle. There

were ten of us. I was the only boy; all the rest were what in common cant are termed men, among whom a conversation sprung up anent the presumption of man. Some held out that the men and boat wad never come back; ithers thought that they should hae been prayed for before they started. A stern old farmer settled that point in a solid sentence—'Pray for them, sir! No sensible man durst. Their conduct is an open tempting of Providence. That's a thing no man has a right to do, and no man dare ask a blessing on such conduct.'

A model of patience, industry, integrity, and every attribute which makes a man worthy of the name. John won, and wore before the world with all the simplicity of a child, a single-hearted individuality. He was a long thinker, a strong thinker, a simple yet determined thinker. He wrought long with his brother-in-law, trying to discover a system of mechanism for working carpets without the aid of draw-boys. He felt, as it were, that he had been pursuing a phantom, and resolved to give up the hunt in that direction. He then turned his spare time into a musical current, and set about making an organ, which he finished, and which I have heard give forth serious, sonorous, and joyful sounds. The step from shoemaking to that of a coach-builder was a wide step; and in the new business were twelve different branches, every one of which he plodded through and mastered with his own hand. He found that in the manipulating intricacy of making a shoe every feeling was present for starting, overcoming, and carrying on the coach-building to a decided success. I often watched the genius of John as he moved so earnest, spoke so kindly, and advised so fatherly.

He had wrought on the sketch of this picture for thirty-two years; and but for want of a Judas, he could have had it finished sooner. His Judas was an ill-looking vagabond, far from being like a man that ony decent body wad tak' up wi'. *I remarked that had I been painting a Judas, I would have selected a thin-lippet, smiling, silly-like, nice man.*

When I passed the Shaw Brig on the auld road to Stewarton, the clear morning was obscured by a dark sky coming ower frae Arran airt. It had all the appearance of a total eclipse. Snow came scowring through the air, with a tremendous rushing wind. I sat down in the ditch on the lee side of the hedge; and in ten minutes the snow lay four inches on the ground. I sat in the

midst of this upper gloom and white under-world with my face toward Paisley, never once deigning to look back.

J. M. W. Turner had seven specimens of his art on their walls. Whatever others might or may think, his pictures to me were the most marvellous of any in the exhibition. They were indications of pictures, painted with the colours which constitute light—red, blue, and yellow. Wind and sunlight moved among his clouds. His water had motion. His mountains were indications; so was everything else. He indicated, and you were left at freedom to fill up your own picture. *Wherever form went, there the prismatic rays went—reddish, greenish, bluish, yellowish, pinkish, purplish, silvery, grey, in abundance; and, in some spot of interest, the pure power of colour, from which everything else in the picture fled to its native place.*

Here we must conclude. Comment and extract can do no justice to a book like this; it must be read throughout to be appreciated. Its peculiar flavour perhaps does not quite satisfy at first, for it is local and provincial, and grows upon the reader, leaving a taste in the mouth like fine old whisky and oatmeal bannocks.

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